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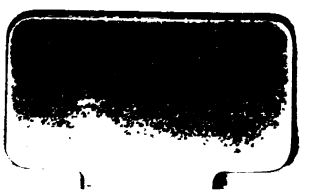
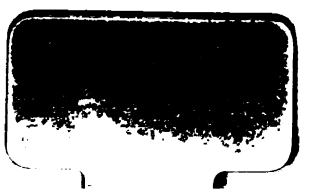




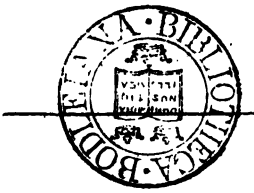
THE EAST LONDON TABERNACLE.

EAST LONDON TABERNACLE PULPIT.

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN.



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PREFACE.

DEAR READER,

Since last we held converse with you through the medium of a Preface, many changes have taken place—changes affecting our own personal life, and church work, but in no wise altering our grateful song of continued mercy. Sickness has laid us low, and physical prostration made our work at times a weariness, but out of all have we been brought, and in all have we experienced a Father's love, and learned lessons which could have been acquired in no other school than Affliction's. We trust, that in some measure, others have reaped a blessing from our trials, as we have known better how to speak a word in season to them that are weary. For every pain and sorrow blessed, we bless our God. For every tear that has taught us how to wipe them from others' cheeks, we thank Him, and if by a sick bed we have learned how to make the pillows of others more soft, we adore Him. During the past year death has shadowed our home and bereavement sorrowed the soul. Our beloved Father is no more. Stricken down in a moment, he died in the prime of his life. Although the loss is chiefly personal, we yet feel the record of it here is not intrusive, but simply just. Whilst, as a son, a sense of delicacy suggests silence, as a pastor, gratitude demands a word of grateful remembrance. The heart of the departed was devoted to our work, and the noble Tabernacle in which we now worship is a monument to his generosity. We thank our God more than language can express, for permitting him to live long enough to see the sanctuary he so

greatly helped to rear filled with listeners, and made the birth-place of many souls. His end was perfect peace, and the sting of death came not nigh him. He has exchanged an earthly Tabernacle for a heavenly Temple. He is now before the Throne, and though the change be a dark one for us, 'tis so surpassing bright for him, we cannot wish him back.

As a church, we have also had great changes, but, thank God, all for the better.

When writing our last Preface, we were worshipping in "Stepney Green Tabernacle," now in "The East London." Then the number of our hearers was about 1300, now nearly 3000. Though mentioning the increase of numbers, we are far from looking upon *that* as the criterion of blessing. Had not conversions also increased in proportion, we had only recorded the fact in sorrow. But thank God they have. Since the opening of the building last February, we have seen, with a view to membership, considerably over two hundred persons, most of whom have been brought by grace out of the world during the year. Doubtless, some may be ready to say, "Is not this vain glorying?" Our answer is, that we record the fact simply to the praise of our God, and as a statement due to those who so generously helped to build the place.

Concerning the Sermons, we can only say, that as none of them were delivered from manuscript, or even copious notes, but either reported at the time, or written from memory afterwards, they make no pretensions to literary refinements. They appear as preached to a large and mixed congregation. We always send to our short-hand writer to take down that Sermon we think most likely to arouse the sinner or comfort the saint, not the one we might imagine would read

the best. Many have been the encouragements we have received. From India, Australia and Canada, good news concerning the Sermons has reached us, whilst we are constantly hearing of their being made a blessing in our English villages.

Most heartily do we thank those friends who have interested themselves in their circulation, and aided us in our effort to spread the truth and win souls.

The two previously published volumes being quite sold out, and applications having been made for back Sermons, also out of print, our publisher has felt justified in reprinting those wanting, and bringing out the entire series in one book. Such as it is, we now offer it to the public, and we pray you kind reader, forgive its faults, excuse its eccentricities, aid its circulation, and love the Saviour proclaimed in its pages.

Your Servant, for Christ's sake,
ARCHIBALD G. BROWN.

MORNINGTON ROAD,
BOW ROAD,

December, 1872.

Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SONG ABOUT REDEMPTION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 11TH, 1868, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done *it*: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."
Isaiah xliv. 23.

WHAT is redemption, and what is there in it that particularly calls for a song? This is our subject for this evening's meditation. Deliverance by redemption is not a deliverance obtained by mere pardoning mercy, as in the case of the debtor, set free at his earnest entreaties by his creditor, in our Lord's parable; nor is it a deliverance accomplished by rescue, obtained by the exertion of force only; but is a deliverance gained by the payment of a price—the full discharge given, on receipt of the full amount due. When our Lord hung in "unknown agonies" on Calvary's tree, he not only made Salvation possible for all (as some do say) but made it certain for his own elect by then and there paying down, not in gold or silver but in precious blood-drops, the redemption price demanded by an inflexible justice:—

"From Bethlehem's inn to Calvary's cross,
Affliction marked his road;
And many a weary step he took
To bring us back to God.

But darker far the awful hour
When on the cross he cried,
'Tis finished,' the full ransom's paid,
Then bowed his head and died."

Yes, beloved, we have been bought out and out by Christ; we belong no longer either to Satan, self, or the world, but to Him who hath purchased his church with his blood, "In whom we have redemption." The text which I have selected for this evening is a magnificent call to heaven and earth to join in singing the glories of redemption—

to preach from it in any measure as it should be preached from, the preacher ought to be in possession of a heart burning with gratitude through a more than usual consciousness of his interest in that redemption. How can he rise to the sublimity of the text unless it be but the echo of his own soul's experience? May the Lord graciously aid and send "help from on high" whilst we endeavour to shew, first *In what particulars redemption calls for a song*, and then *Who those are who should sing the song.*

1. First then—IN WHAT PARTICULARS REDEMPTION CALLS FOR A SONG?

My difficulty here will only be one of choice, for every particular of redemption is worthy of a sonnet. The whole is a golden harp, and every string has only to be touched in order to give the sweetest melody. Certainly redemption calls for a song when we remember, first, *Its Author.* Our text seems to teach this in its very wording, "Sing, O ye heavens!" Why?" "For the *Lord* hath done it, break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest and every tree therein." Why? "For the *Lord* hath redeemed Jacob." Herein is indeed a marvel of grace, demanding the highest anthems ransomed lips can raise. What could man have been to Him? What shadow of an obligation was there on his part to put forth the slightest effort to save a single one? Had the whole human race like a roaring torrent been turned to hell and left to roll its awful course until the end of time, who could have dared to impugn the justice of the doom. What could it have been to God whether man was saved or damned? He would have been glorified in either case, and still remained "The blessed (happy) God." But sweet thought! it *was* much to him; his sovereign unaccountable love said "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." The Lord hath done it, and done it *alone.* With whom took he counsel in this matter? Who paid part-price with him? Redemption is no work of the many; it is God's own in plan and execution; he came forth to the work "in the greatness of his strength," "mighty to save." It is through the person of the Redeemer that redemption gains its infinite value. He threw the weight of Deity in the scale. It was the altar of his Godhead that made the gift of his humanity of boundless price; sufficient to make a just substitute for a myriad host of fallen men:—let me try and more clearly explain my meaning by an anecdote. There was once a lady who undertook the task of instructing a deaf and dumb lad in the things of God; of course she could only speak to him by signs and pictures. She drew upon a paper a picture of a great crowd of people, old and young, standing near a wide and deep pit, out of which smoke and flames were issuing—on a corner of the paper she drew the figure of One coming down from heaven on purpose to save them. She explained on her fingers to the boy that when this person came, he asked God not to throw the people into the pit if he himself agreed to be nailed to a cross for them; and how directly he bowed his head upon the cross, the pit was shut up! The deaf and dumb boy made signs that the person who died was only *one*, and the persons saved *many.* How could God take *one* for so many? The lady taking off a

gold ring, put it beside a heap of withered leaves, and asked the boy which was the best, "the *one* gold ring or the many dry leaves?" The boy clapped his hands, and spelt "the one! the one! the one!"

The Lord Jesus is the one gold ring whose atonement is sufficient for the many dry leaves. Think of redemption's author, and then "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it:" and "shout, ye lower parts of the earth: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

2. Another particular in redemption that specially calls for a song is *Its cost.* Well may the believer stand aghast at the awful price his soul's redemption cost. What that price was Peter tells us—I Peter ch. i., 18-19. "Not with corruptible things as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." And well also may he stand astonished at that incomparable love that paid the price demanded.

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew."

The value of any article is in proportion to its cost to procure. The pearl that gleams on the brow of yonder bride is immensely precious, because of its rescue from the great deep at the risk of the pearl-diver's life as he was dragged into the boat half-dead, with the blood gushing from his nostrils. Estimating redemption by this test, who can reckon its worth? The heavenly pearl-diver beheld us deep-sunken in the sea of depravity and sin; he not only saw, hut he coveted the jewel, that it might for ever flash in his imperial diadem. Stripping himself of the robes of heaven, and laying aside the purple of royalty, he stood upon the battlements of heaven, and sprang into the deepest part of the black ocean:—down—down he went—the floods roared over his head; "all thy waves and thy billows went over me"—he reached the lowest depth, for "he became obedient to the death, even the death of the cross;" and at the lowest depth he grasped the jewel and bore it triumphantly above;

"O measureless might;
Ineffable love."

Gethsemane's bloody sweat; the bloodier scourging in Pilate's hall; and the ignominious death at Golgotha were all part of the price he paid to ransom fallen man.

Behold, O saint, redemption's cost, and then "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it:" and "shout ye lower parts of the earth: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

3. Thirdly, I would try and strengthen the reasons for song by reminding you of *Its completeness.* Christ hath so gloriously completed the work of redemption that nothing can possibly be added to it, "the Lord hath *done* it." Unlike the atonement made by the Aaronic priesthood, it lasts for ever. In their sacrifices there was a continual remembrance made of sin. Year after year the high-priest entered into

the holiest of all; every entrance witnessing that the previous atonement made was but of limited efficacy. Paul, in his own masterly style, draws the vivid contrast between the two, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained *eternal redemption* for us." "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high-priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of other; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now *once* in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and once more, "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered *one sacrifice for sins for ever*, sat down on the right hand of God." Yes, the atonement of Christ is so infinite that nothing more can or will be demanded by God throughout all ages. Never more shall the "Son of God" become the "man of sorrows;" never more shall Calvary's hill run red with a Redeemer's blood. If thou art not saved by the atonement made, thou must be most certainly damned; it is thy only hope, "The Lord hath *done* it," and will never repeat it. View, believer, redemption's completeness, and then exclaim, "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

4. I would have you observe as a fresh incentive to song, *Its comprehensiveness.* Redemption has a giant's span. To dwell on all we are redeemed from, and redeemed to, would take a week of preaching; and we should then be no nearer the conclusion of the matter. It will take eternity to reveal all. Let me therefore only mention a few of the most prominent evils from which we are redeemed. Beloved, if we are Christ's, then have we been redeemed *from the hand of Satan.* Man has by sin sold himself to the devil, "Ye have sold yourself for nought" The devil can claim his own; but those are *not* his for whom Christ died, "they have been redeemed without money," therefore his power over them is usurped. Hands off! Hands off that man in the gallery! he is not thine, O Satan, but Christ's. Hands off that trembling sister in the aisle! she has been redeemed; washed in blood! behold the Lord's mark on her forehead. Claim thine own swine, but leave Christ's sheep alone. Yes, blessed be God, Christ hath "delivered the lawful captive" from him that was too strong for him. Are we not also redeemed from the *guilt of sin.* The black cloud that hung over us has been blotted out; as the verse previous to our text says "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins, return unto me, for I have redeemed thee;" our guilt has been removed so clean away that even God's holy eyes behold "no spot or wrinkle or any such thing." With the guilt, away goes the *power of sin*; no longer galley slaves to our own lusts, but Christ's free men to follow after holiness. If we be redeemed from the guilt and power of sin, then are we also redeemed from the *consequences of sin.* "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." In relation to the saint, redeeming blood has put hell's fire out. What hell is, a redeemed soul never has and never shall know. He hath also

redeemed us from the *power of death*. In Hosea xiii, 14, we read "I will ransom thee from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." There is no death for the child of God—he has only to walk through "the valley of the *shadow* of death." Death left its sting in Christ; the only sting death ever had was sin, and that is gone;

"It is not death to die,
To leave this weary road;
And 'midst the brotherhood on high,
To be at home with God.

Jesus, Thou Prince of life!
Thy chosen cannot die;
Like Thee they conquer in the strife,
To reign with Thee on high."

And to close this point, Christ hath redeemed the *bodies of his saints for the glories of the resurrection morn*. "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body." The sleeping dust of God's departed host is included in the Redeemer's purchase, and when the archangel's trump shall sound, to announce the dawning of the resurrection day, then from marble sepulchres, forgotten graves, and the deep ocean, shall that dust arise in glorified bodies to proclaim the comprehensiveness of God's Redemption. Then "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it; shout ye lower parts of the earth; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

5. Fifthly and lastly, the chiefest cause for song is *redemption being that in which God has been pleased to glorify himself the most*. "The Lord hath glorified himself in Israel." All the attributes of God are *most* gloriously to be seen in redemption work. *Justice* stands forth in magnificent grandeur right through the whole of the Old Testament; it was displayed in awful splendour when the rebel angels were hurled from thrones in heaven to beds in hell; when the old world was destroyed by a watery deluge, and Sodom and Gomorrah with a rain of fire; but Jesus hanging on the cross betwixt two thieves until death terminated his agony, is the most amazing evidence of God's stern justice that ever has or ever shall be given throughout time or eternity. Never was justice so glorified, as when the cry rang through heaven, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Think, moreover, of the glory that accrues to the infinite *wisdom* of God through redemption.

"All worlds his glorious power confess,
His wisdom all his works express."

But amid all the varied works of God, none so loudly proclaim "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" as that of redemption. Pause for a moment, and consider the demands made upon that wisdom. A plan of salvation was required which should shew the greatest hatred to sin, and at the same time the greatest love to the

sinner—which should leave justice unimpaired, truth unviolated, and yet allow mercy to triumph—which should at one and the same time fulfil all the threats against sin, and all the promises and types of a Saviour; which should satisfactorily and for ever answer the question "How then can man be justified with God?" a problem which had all the angels met in solemn conclave for ten thousand years to solve would still have been infinitely beyond them; but wisdom triumphed, it found the thread that led to the solution, and in redemption "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." God is glorified, sinners are saved, and Satan is confounded.

That the *power of God* is magnified, I need only refer you to one passage; you will find it in Ephesians i, 19 & 20. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know *** what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." The last attribute I shall mention which received exceeding glory through redemption is *Mercy*. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world; that we might live through him." Would you know what God's love and mercy is? Then you must stand before the bleeding Saviour on Calvary's tree, and read it there drawn out in crimson characters. In Christ, behold mercy incarnated, love embodied! I know that mercy may be seen in the light, heard in the breeze, and discerned in everything; but for all this it has pleased God to make redemption his chosen panorama of mercy. An old divine has well said "may not a christian turn psalm cxxxvi into gospel-language and say, "O give thanks unto our Redeemer; for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who said 'Lo, I come,' for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who was born in a stable, for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who fulfilled the law for us, for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who expired upon a cross, for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven to manage our affairs, for his mercy endureth for ever."

Now, believer, hast thou a higher or deeper desire than that thy God should be glorified? Thou can'st not have!—then rejoice, for thy Lord is superlatively glorified in redemption. Make the language of the text thine own, "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout ye lower parts of the earth: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel"

II. Secondly—WHO THOSE ARE WHO SHOULD SING THE SONG.

I have dwelt so much longer upon the first division than I intended, that but very little time is left me for describing who the songsters ought to be. I will therefore only briefly mention them, and leave you to supply the deficiency in your private meditations. The first called on in the text is, *Heaven!* "Sing, O ye heavens," and well you may, for redemption has shed a fresh lustre on your glories. The highest

joy the angels can have, is that which arises from seeing their King glorified. I have already endeavoured to shew that a glory beyond all glories flows to Christ through the channel of redemption. therefore am I in no wonderment at the marked interest displayed by the angelic world in every step of that redemption. It was indeed the true Jacob's ladder, linking heaven and earth, and therefore on every round an angel stood. Sweetly did they break the still silence of that first Christmas morn, with such a carol as the world had never heard before. A shepherd band was "abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night," when, "lo, an angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them," and then did the angel say "Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." No sooner had this sweet gospel song died away into the previous stillness of the night, than a very constellation of angels shone round the astonished band, and sang, as never mortal ear had heard before, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Think ye not also that they who are "ministering spirits" to the saints were not constant attendants on our Lord also, in his thirty years of sojourn here; this we know, that when our Saviour was in Gethsemane weeping, all bathed in bloody sweat, there appeared "an angel strengthening him."

In wondrous awe they must have grouped themselves, unseen to mortal eye, around the cross, and marvelled at the love that would not call them to the rescue. With what ecstatic joy did that angel (on the third morning's dawn) roll back the stone. In what a delirium of rejoicing was heaven thrown when the conqueror ascended

> "With scars of honor in his flesh,
> And triumph in his eyes."

How the very walls of heaven shook when all the assembled host shouted "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

Sing, O ye heavens! The answer comes rolling back, We do—we do. Behold also the redeemed in heaven!! Listen to *their* song, sweeter even than an angel's, "Unto him that loved us." Do ye tell them to sing? They answer back, We do—we do—and ever will. All heaven unites in this redemption song.

2. ***Let the Ransomed on earth take their part.*** "Shout, ye lower parts of the earth." O, forest of the Lord, and every tree of his right hand planting, break forth into singing. Whoever else may be silent, *ye* must not. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever, let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy."

Behold your serfdom gone—your bonds broken—your chains snapt—your sins forgiven—your heaven secured, and then sing. Oh shame to us that we sing so seldom, and when we do, so faintly.

Where is our harp to-night? Hanging on yonder willow? Let us down with it, and

"Loud to the praise of love divine,
Bid every string awake."

Believer, thou art the lamb taken out of the lion's jaw, and delivered from the paw of the bear. Then sing thy David's praise. Let not the stars of heaven put to the blush the stars of the Lord. They sing their Maker's praise, do you shout your Redeemer's.

3. Surely *who that have loved ones that have been redeemed* should join us in the song. Parents, do you not remember how you used to pray and weep, and then weep and pray, over that son of yours? Do you not remember how you almost despaired of his conversion? and do you not, above all, remember that day when those prayers were answered? that day when for the first time you beheld him seeking for Jesus? Did he not, last Lord's-day evening, sit with you at the table of his Saviour and yours? Oh sing, for the Lord hath done it. Are there not many of us who can think of parents—sisters—brothers—husbands—wives—that have been brought in by grace, and made truly one with us in the very closest of bonds, and ought we not to be among the singers? We ought indeed. Lord, help us to-night to sing that Thou hast "done it."

4. Let me close by saying the *trembling sinner* has good cause indeed to join his voice with ours. Ah, anxious peuiteut, is not to-night's text a gleam of sunshine in thy darkness? "The Lord hath *done* it." If *done* then there can be no necessity for any addition of thine.

"Nothing either great or small,
Nothing, sinner, no;
Jesus did it, did it *all*,
Long, *long*, ago."

Was blood required for thy cleansing? It has been shed. Was a righteousness necessary for thine acceptance? It has been worked out. All that the salvation of your soul demands has been done. Cease then from trying to add to a perfect work. Go in thy emptiness to the Redeemer's fulness. Venture thy soul on him. Stake all thine eternal interests on the complete atonement he has made, God help you to *now*, and then ere you leave this tabernacle shall you say, with a heart overflowing with gratitude,

"Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

God grant that this may be the blessed result, for Jesus' sake.

AMEN.

Scripture Read, ISAIAH 44 c. to 23 v.
Hymns sung out of "Our own Hymn Book."—203, 434, 251.

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HARD WORK AND BAD PAY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 8TH, 1868, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."—ROMANS vi, 23.

AT the commencement of this morning's service, when preaching from Psalm ciii, 11—13, I stated that the sermon would be almost entirely for the saints of God; that the fare would mainly be such as could only be enjoyed by those who had already tasted that the "Lord was gracious," but now this evening it is my aim to go after the sinner, and by the Spirit's aid speak such words as shall arrest the attention, arouse the conscience, convince the soul, and cause it to fly from the wrath to come. It is indeed unquestionably sweet as fellow-pilgrims on the road to the celestial city, to beguile the distance by converse concerning its glories, and the mercy of its king; the fellowship of saints often causes many a piece of road which would otherwise be steep and rough, to become easy and pleasant, but let us not be so enamoured with our own prospects as to forget there are thousands yet dwelling in the city of destruction, nor be so occupied with mutual edification as to forget to cry out to the besotted inhabitants, "Escape for thy life."

This morning with grateful hearts we viewed the mercy that had saved us from eternal shipwreck, and placed our feet firm on the Rock of Ages, high up above the reach of the angry waves that had so nigh engulphed us; this evening, whilst still rejoicing in our own security, we desire to throw some planks and spars to those who are yet struggling in the dark waters, and fast sinking to rise no more. The text I have chosen with this view is the solemn summing up of the argument in the previous part of the chapter. Paul had, in his own masterly style, clearly demonstrated that it was impossible for those who had been renewed by grace still to remain the servants of sin: at the very thought of such blasphemy he breaks forth into the exclamation, "God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?". He thanks God that those to whom he is writing are no longer the blinded slaves to sin they once were, but are now "become servants to God," having their "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life: for the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Doubtless, dear friends, in your own private reading, you have often noticed the striking contrasts set forth in the words employed by the apostle. You have "sin" in contrast with "God," "death" in contrast with "life," and most suggestively "wages" in contrast with "gift." The thoughts begotten by the last-mentioned contrast will constitute our theme for this evening. The first portion will be dark enough—terribly dark— we wish it to be—may God help us to make it so, not that we have any pleasure in so preaching, far from it, but only that it may serve as a black background to set forth more transcendently the glory of the latter. The darker the night, the more brilliant does the daylight appear. The text divides itself naturally into two divisions. *Hard work and bad pay; No work and rich reward.* Let these then be our divisions.

I. First then—HARD WORK AND BAD PAY. By way of opening up the subject, let us notice, 1. *Who are the servants who receive the pay?* All by nature. There is not a single one of woman born but who is born into this dread service. It is the heirloom left to all mankind by our first sire Adam. When he, our representative and head, yielded to the subtle tempter and partook of the forbidden fruit, he by that act not only made himself the servant to whom he obeyed, but entailed the accursed service on all who should hereafter spring from his loins. We are slaves born upon the estate of sin. The garb of servitude is upon us from our very birth. But let us remember that if we are servants by nature so are we by *voluntary choice.* Shame to that man who is mean, base, and blasphemous enough to lay his guilt at Adam's door, and so try to shift off from his own shoulders the responsibility of his guilt. There is not a sinner but what has willingly, and with the full consent of his heart, chosen sin, nor has Satan a servant but who has of his own free will entered his service, glories in it, calls it liberty, and views all else as bondage. No sooner does a man arrive at what the world calls "years of discretion" than his language concerning Christ is, "We will not have this man to reign over us," and throwing on one side with scorn the gentle yoke of Jesus, he hires himself out to the Devil, and his service becomes his delight; his chains he views as bracelets; the rank flowers of this world's pleasures entwined around them hide from his sight the rusty iron, and the clatter of his fetters he mistakes for music. Offer him freedom, and he will laugh you to scorn, and tell you he has it. He looks upon the saint with pity, and, dancing in his chains like a maniac, calls him a fool to endure such bondage. Satan has no mere eye-service menials in his employ—they are all those who entered his service cheerfully, and will cheerfully remain there to the last, doing his bidding unless sovereign grace prevent. The servants of Satan are *many.* I noticed the other day in the reported speech of a candidate for parliamentary honours, that one of the chief reasons he had to bring forward why he should have a seat in St. Stephen's was that he employed more men than any of the other candidates; if this be a valid reason or good argument, then most certainly must a place be found in the House for Satan, for who employs so many hands as he? His workshop is the world. Go where you please, at home or abroad, you find his liveried servants,

those who are in constant receipt of his wages. Unlike other employers, he never diminishes the number of his hands, for if any are by grace persuaded to leave his service, it goes much against his grain. It matters not to him whether trade be slack or otherwise, he can always find employment for all; such a thing as his ever giving a man the "sack" was never known. Out of the vast number of his servants then, there are sure to be many here to-night; how solemn the thought that along these galleries, down those aisles, on the platform beneath me, and on this upper rostrum around me, there are souls whom the Devil claims as his own; souls who are in the employ of perdition; souls who are only waiting for the wages of Hell. Oh mourn, ye saints of God, that in spite of all the accessions to Zion, despite all the means the church puts forth, Satan's band of slaves yet remains a myriad host.

Let me further say that *his servants belong to all ages.* It is heart-breaking to behold at what an early age the badge of his service is worn. Children not in their teens, and lads not out of them, are every day through the medium of our police courts astonishing even a sinful world with their proficiency in guilt; and side by side with them, stands the hoary headed criminal, whose strength has been withered, and whose locks have grown white in the service of the same relentless master. None are disqualified through age; none too young to be received; none too old to be retained. His servants belong to *both sexes.* Yes, sister, you who shudder when hearing the brutal oath; you who tremble on meeting the reeling drunkard; you who have been brought up amid every comfort, and nurtured in the home of piety; you also, unless converted by the grace of God, are among the number of those whom Satan reckons as his own. His servants also belong to *all grades of society.* Exemption none can boast on the ground of social standing. "Ah," says the fashionable wealthy denizen of the west, "it is indeed shocking to think of the awful depravity which shows itself along Whitechapel, and lurks in the back streets of Bethnal Green. It is really quite painful to contemplate it." Then don't. Look nearer home; for we imagine that in the sight of God there is not much to choose between Bethnal Green and Belgravia, Westbourne and Whitechapel. The only difference is that in your neighbourhood the Devil clothes his servants in more attractive garb; the repulsiveness of sin is hidden, but sin itself is just as rampant. A handsome robe may conceal quite as leprous a body as filthy tattered rags leave bare. High and low, rich and poor, it is all the same. Yonder despot glories in his power; boasts that a single word of his can make the nations quake, proudly asserts that at his word a million men would march into the field for bloody war; and while he vaunts, the Devil laughs, and well he may, for the tyrant is *his* tool. Kings, princes, emperors, statesmen, and paupers are all equally his servants.

Let us now view, 2. *The work they have to perform.* To be Satan's servant is no sinecure. He finds employment for all. His work is both hard and constant. To one he says, "*Get rich;*" and at the word of command the poor wretch at once begins to toil, and laborious toil it is. He works, driven on by an unseen lash, as no slave ever could or would. All his thoughts are tinged with gold. All

the generous impulses he ever had are dried up and withered away by the burning fever of avarice; his health fails, his spirit loses all its elasticity, but still on and on he is obliged to toil; he is maddened with a golden thirst; and the more he has the more intolerable does the craving grow. He is like the shipwrecked seaman, who, after drifting for many a day in the open boat beneath a tropical sun without a drop of cooling water, at last in his desperation drinks the briny sea, and in horror find his agonies increased a thousandfold; but, having once commenced, he feels compelled to take draught after draught, until at last he dies deliriously. His home soon loses all its sweetness, its comforts are hidden from his eyes by the veil of gold. The young and loving wife soon grows to be a broken hearted one; she sees her rightful position in his heart usurped by a hideous golden idol. This is no mere sentimental picture, but the recital of stern facts. Better far, for many, if the wealth had never come, for reversing the proverb, and thereby we believe making it more true; when wealth came in at the door, love flew out at the window. Happier a hundredfold were those times, when, with but little income, and often put to many a strait, they yet felt that they had their all in each other's love.

And do you think the poor slave has any satisfaction in his gainings? No! not a whit; he is ready to curse the very gold he is obliged to scrape together. Find me a miser and you find me a lump of incarnate misery. Satan is too hard a master to allow his servants even the small gratification of having some pleasure in the success of their work. Never does the Devil set a man to harder work than when he says, "Servant get rich." And thousands of such poor wretched slaves there are in this great city, perhaps some here to-night, cringing to, and worshipping the world's trinity of £ : s. : d. To another he gives an order, summed up in the word *drink*, and is not obedience to that command hard work? Do you think there is any real pleasure to the drunkard? Ask him. Let him tell you about the inward gnawings, the parched lip, the head that seems like a blacksmith's shop with all the hammers at work; and the thousand and one pains beside that rack the body after a night's debauch, not to speak of all the mental torture he undergoes. Hard work! Yes, there is no slavedom more killing, both to body and soul than slavedom to the drink.

Have I here any drunkard listening to me to-night, if so, I know your own conscience bears testimony to the truth of what I have stated. Hear the poor slave sing "Britons never shall be slaves." Does it not seem a horrible mockery when the very one who sings it, is fettered hand and foot himself with the accursed sin; and who, although knowing he is destroying body, home, and soul, yet confesses he has no power to snap the cords. He who dies a drunkard's death, and enters a drunkard's grave, has worked hard for the result. Satan sets another to obtain *pleasure*. And here I think I can hear one of you saying, "What do you mean to say, Mr. Brown, that pleasure is work?" Yes, I do, and uncommonly hard work too. Men will always, even in the most lawful pleasures, do that which if required of them in an ordinary day's work, would be the subject of much grumbling, and

would in all probability be refused. Who does not know by experience that a day's pleasuring is more tiring than an equal number of hours' work? And if this be true in an exceptional case, how much more true is it when it applies to a votary of pleasure, to the gay man of the world.

The child of God will find his sweetest joys at home. The religion of Jesus endears the man's own fireside to him. The rest in his family is welcome. Not so with the devotee of pleasure. Possessed with the evil spirit, he goes hither and thither seeking rest and finding none. The quiet of the home he terms slow, so he launches forth into a whirlpool of dissipation, and singing "Begone, dull care," tries to persuade himself he is happy. Delusive thought!! He knows and feels his misery, and finds that though he may have excitement, he is an utter stranger to satisfaction. The pleasure that once enchanted him, by frequent indulgence becomes insipid; something stronger, more vicious is needed to stimulate his jaded spirits. He goes from bad to worse, until at last every sinful pleasure has in its turn been tried, and in its turn grown tame. His hateful and hating master still goads him on, and he works like a slave at a mill, grinding on at pleasures which have long since failed to yield him any. Of all the miserable sights on earth that of an aged *roue* is the most miserable, unable to find a whit of pleasure in the things that once delighted him, yet hankering after them with an unabated longing. Satan sets a fourth to *act the hypocrite*, and for this service he pays the highest wages, and right he should, for the work must be tremendous. How great a strain, to have always to remember the part he has to act. Never to dare to be natural, ever dreading exposure, always being a something in appearance directly opposed to what he is in reality, to have to sham the externals of a religion without any of its inward comfortings, to be obliged to renounce the pleasures of time, without the hope of any in eternity. Surely the wages of the hypocrite are hardly earned. But whatever the work may be to which the sinner is set, it is work *without a pause*. Satan has no old pensioners permitted to end their days in peaceful idleness, they must keep on to the last. Ere that great blot of slavery was wiped away from the southern states of America, many of us doubtless read with tears and burning indignation of the weary, jaded, trembling band, driven out to the field in early morn, and kept unceasingly to the work by the blows of the cow hide until some dropt among the cotton trees, and at last found rest in death. Feelings welled up from the bosom, too big for utterance. Behold, saints of God, a sadder sight still, and may kindred emotions be felt. Look at the vast mass of your fellow creatures, slaves to a greater tyrant than ever breathed "down south." Look at them driven on with blows and curses to perdition. Behold how fast they fall upon the field, and in that fall they find no rest, but only enter on far deeper woe, the payment of their wages. There are such here to-night; lift up your hearts and pray.

"Slaves to Satan heretofore,
Let them *now* be slaves no more,
Lord, we turn our eyes to thee,
Let the captive sinner free!"

Trusting we have made our second point clear, namely, that Satan's servants have to work, let us now turn in the third and last place under this division to 3—*the wages paid them.* "The wages of sin is death." What! is the reward for all that toil death? Yes, simply death! Oh, extraordinary wages, but more extraordinary still, that any should be found to work for them. The *death of the body* is but the result of sin. Had not sin found its way into God's fair earth, death also would have been for ever a stranger. Death is the dark shadow sin casts. For six thousand years men have been receiving the wages of death. Death has passed upon all men for that all have sinned. Think of the aggregate of sorrow that has fallen on this world through death, the fruit of sin. Could all the groans that have burst from broken-hearted mourners since our first parents wept over their murdered son, be gathered into one, what a deep thunder-peal of anguish would it be! Were all the tears that death has caused to flow, collected, what a briny ocean would they constitute. Let those call sin a trifle who dare, but to us 'tis clear that that which could bring on man so awful a curse as death must in itself be something unutterably horrible: and yet death, mere physical death is the least that is meant here. Was this all the word meant, did men when they die, die like dogs, there would be no occasion for the agony of soul we often have; but alas! alas! the death referred to here is a death that never dies; it is placed in contrast to "eternal life," it means *eternal* death, in another word Hell. Here, poor sinner, are thy wages; here is the result of a life's toil for Satan. Let me say, moreover, sin *pays some of its wages on account*, it gives sometimes an instalment of Hell on earth. The wretched debauchee we attempted to describe often finds it so. Mark his haggard countenance, his trembling gait, follow him to the hospital—nay don't—let his end remain secret; terrible are the wages he receives on account. Look at the drunkard; he is paid for his sin in his home, until not a single stick remains to tell of a place that once was bright and happy. Have you ever seen a drunkard in delirium tremens? if so, you will never doubt about the wages *he* receives upon account, hearken to his shrieking, listen to his raving as he imagines he is being dragged to hell by ten thousand fiery snakes: this is all included in the wages "death," and yet after all, this is nothing. Were the only wages for sin those received in lifetime we could be calmer, but oh, *Eternity, Eternity* is one long pay day, and the wages paid is death. I will close this dark division of my subject by an illustration, which I have read somewhere, used by a minister when preaching on this same text. "Suppose," said he, "a person should go to a blacksmith and say to him 'I want you to make me a long and heavy chain; have it done by such a time and I will pay you cash for it.' The blacksmith, though pressed with other work, for the sake of the money, commences it, and after toiling hard for some time finishes it. The person calls, and says on looking at it, 'Yes, it is a good chain, but not long enough; work on it another week, I will then call and pay you for it.' Encouraged by the promise of full reward the blacksmith toils on, adding link to link. When his employer calls again he praises him as before, but still insists that 'the chain is too short.' 'But' says the blacksmith, 'I can do no more; my iron is all

gone, and my strength too.' 'Oh, never mind, add a few more links, the chain will then answer my purpose, and you shall be well paid.' The blacksmith, with his remainining strength, and last few scraps of iron, adds the last link he can. 'The chain will now do,' says the man, 'you have worked hard and long; I will now pay you your wages' and taking the chain, he suddenly bound the labourer hand and foot, and cast him into a furnace of fire. 'Such' said the preacher, 'are the wages of sin." It promises much, but its reward is death. Servants of sin and Satan present, behold your future doom; be honest, and confess that your service is hard work and bad pay. May the Lord make you feel it so, then will you be more willing to close in with the sweet offer contained in the latter clause of the verse.

II. No Work and rich Reward. I have already so far exceeded the time I had intended to devote to the first portion of the subject that I shall be compelled to be exceedingly brief in that which yet remains. I shall only be able to give you a meagre outline, and leave to yourselves the filling up of details.

In this clause of the text you have nothing about work or wages. The pivot word of the whole is "*gift.*" God absolutely refuses to sell salvation. He will give to any, but barter with none. His terms are "without money and without price." Behold then how lovely a contrast we have in the text. On one side is hard, unceasing, slave-driving work, with its wages of misery and eternal death; on the other, confronting it like an angel of light, you have the full, free, loving gift of eternal life. But is it not strange that the very freeness of salvation is the great stumbling block in the way of its acceptance? Not more strange than true. Human pride revolts against it; to receive as a pauper that for which all payment is refused is too humbling. Was eternal life for sale, the vast majority would be buyers. But how comforting should this word "gift" be to those present who feel they have nought to pay; to those who are conscious of spiritual bankruptcy. Here is a salvation that meets your case exactly. Nothing required from those who have nothing. Oh, close in with so blessed an offer. Make (as holy Rutherford calls it) this bargain with the Lord, to receive all, and for the all pay nothing. Believing is nothing else than freely accepting with the heart that which God freely offers through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice, moreover, the *blessing specified.* "*Eternal life;*" and this the Lord permits his children to enjoy on earth; for as part of the wages of sin is paid on account in this life, so even in this life foretastes of the gift of God are enjoyed by the saints. Beautifully does Dr. Watts express it.

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below;
Celestial fruits on *earthly ground*
From faith and hope may grow.

The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets;
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets."

Contentment, conscious peace with God, inward peace of soul, quiet trustfulness as to the future, beside a thousand other joys, are some of the clusters of the grapes of Eschol, that refresh the wearied one on his journey to the land where the vine grows. And how about the end, when the gift is received in full? What does not "eternal life" include? An entrance through the pearly gates into the city—a position before the throne—the company of angels—the never-ceasing song of the redeemed—the entire absence of all shade of sorrow; these and bliss unutterable are all included in "eternal life;" and all this is "*Through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

Forget not, believer, in thy joy the channel through whom it flows; it is a gift to thee, because thy Lord paid all. Our peace is through his chastisement, our joy through his sorrow, our songs through his sighs, our cleansing through his blood, our acceptance through his righteousness, our crown through his cross. Sinner, dost thou desire to be saved; art thou tired and sick of thy present service? Behold then the way of escape; accept as a sinner the free salvation of God offered to thee in the person of Jesus. Trust him, trust him only, throw overboard all other hopes; take him as thy Saviour; cease from thy works and trust to his; let it no longer be what thou hast done, or what thou mayst hope to do; but what he *has done*. Spurn not to-night the free gift of God, nor in thy madness still work for deadly wages. Something tells me to-night, and the thought oppresses me, that this sermon will be the deciding cast in the history of some; the scales are on the balance, but they will turn to-night. Which way? Eternity hangs on the answer. Let me try in conclusion to drive this thought home by an illustration. It is stated that the Missouri and Columbia rivers have their sources within a few yards of each other upon the summit of the rocky mountains. A breath of wind either from east or west will decide into which stream the rain drops fall. But when once they have commenced their downward course upon the mountain side, what power on earth can arrest their progress? They mingle with other streams; they dash and foam over precipices, and roll with irresistible power towards the ocean. Those upon the west side are borne out into the calm bosom of the Pacific, whilst those upon the east roll into the stormy billows of the Atlantic.

Sinner, you stand upon the top of the mountain. On the one side of you far distant lies the ocean of God's love—boundless, stormless and pacific, with which the river of life is connected. On the other side a muddy, inky stream rushes from your very feet into the roaring Atlantic of God's wrath. Perhaps this evening's sermon is the breeze which will decide into which stream you are carried. Which shall it be? May the Lord save you. God forbid that in this concourse of people there should be a single one who shall ever learn by bitter, eternal experience that "the wages of sin is death."

Scripture read. John iii, from 14th verse.

Hymns sung from "Our own Hymn Book."—551, 606, 550.

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HOW LONG?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 6TH, 1868, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

LORD, how long wilt thou look on?—PSALM XXXV, 17.

THIS psalm, as I endeavoured to show whilst reading it at the commencement of the present service, is not only as it is entitled "A psalm of David," but also a psalm of the Messiah. A greater than David is here. The sweet singer of Israel doubtless expresses in its verses his own experience and his personal longings, but whilst doing so, he also prophetically sets forth what would be the griefs, sorrows, and prayers of him, who whilst David's Lord, was in his humanity the "Son of David." There is a striking resemblance in this psalm to the twenty-second, in which the prophet personates the Messiah in his state of humiliation and suffering. In both felt weakness is expressed. In both cruel persecutors are described. In both integrity is maintained, and in both the want of comfortings from on high is portrayed as the bitterest drop in the cup. The same one who in the twenty-second psalm exclaims, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" also gives utterance to the bitter cry of our text, "Lord how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions."

But as in the exposition I dwelt almost entirely upon the Messianic view of the psalm, I desire now to take the words as David's own (and most assuredly they are) as setting forth the sorrow of soul that he himself endured. The troubles of his heart were many and large. He

was surrounded by implacable foes, by whom no weapon that could inflict a wound was neglected. His character was traduced; his motives misinterpreted; his times of trouble and adversity made the times of their fiercest onset, "in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together." His faith in God was derided; and his returns of kindness to them scorned. Overwhelmed with difficulty, and seeing no way whereby he could extricate himself, he looks up to his God, and with an intensity of earnestness prays, "Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." But here a fresh trial and unexpected disappointment meets him. The Lord seems deaf to his cry. Not only does man persecute him, but the very God in whom is all his trust, seems to have forgotten him. Earth is ready to swallow him up, and heaven seems as brass above him. Now is his misery crowned, now has his cup of sorrow received the bitterest drop of gall: the last weight his wounded spirit can bear has been placed upon it, and in an agony he cries, "Lord, *how long* wilt thou look on?" Let his position at this moment be our theme for meditation this morning. We will notice—first, *a trying experience*—secondly, *a cry of anguish*—and in the third place will try and give some *comforting answers*.

I. First then—we have A TRYING EXPERIENCE. I will try and explain its nature. Notice, dear friends, that *it was not that he doubted whether the Lord saw his trouble*. Far from it; for in the twenty-second verse he says (in reference to his persecution) "This thou hast seen, O Lord." David was far too deeply taught concerning the omniscience of God to entertain for a moment the thought that God was in ignorance of his situation. *This* sin of unbelief did Israel fall into when it said, "My way is hid from the Lord: my judgment is passed over from my God." No! this was not David's trouble; his trial was that God ONLY seemed to see, and nothing more. *He felt as if the Lord was only a spectator of his difficulty*, not the deliverer from it. His eye saw, but his right hand remained unlifted. Let me try and make my meaning plainer by an illustration. David was fighting in a valley. His foes were legion: their weapons deadly. He felt it to be awful odds. Long had the fight continued, and bravely had he kept his ground. Not a foe had seen his back! he declares they never shall. Grasping the sword with both hands, he swings it like a giant would a reed, and at every blow an enemy sinks down to rise no more. Brave blow!! Well struck!! Manfully fought!! we cry, as we gaze upon the conflict. But now numbers begin to tell: they roll upon him like a flood, and though fighting like a lion, he is gradually beaten back; step by step. Everything begins to swim around him; his hand feels as if it were grown to the sword hilt, and his blows begin to lose their fury. Anxiously does he look to yonder hill-top, where in a halo of glory stands his Lord; all day long has he been there, and all day long has David waited to hear the shout, "*To the Rescue.*" It was this expectation that nerved his arm with might, and filled his heart with

courage. Hour after hour had passed, and still the Lord *looks on*; and now he feels it must be all over in a few moments; the enemy's steel gleams in his face, their weapons clash by his ear. Now or never! and a cry rings over the battle-field, "Lord, how long wilt thou look on?" Or to describe the experience by another illustration which may be more expressive of the feelings of some present. David was being swept away in a swollen river. He is out in mid-stream. The black waters are singing a death-song in his ears, sometimes for a moment they gurgle in his throat. He strikes out strongly for the shore, but despite all his efforts, he is hurried at a race-horse speed towards a yawning gulf ahead, down which the waters roar. He has been sucked down by the eddies many a time, and as often risen again, to see his Lord upon the bank, beholding his peril. And now the thunder of the cataract can be heard each moment more distinctly. The waters seem to laugh as they hurl him along. He can bear the agony no longer, and the shriek is heard above the flood, "Lord, how long wilt thou look on?"

This trying experience, when the Lord seems to be only a spectator of our misery is not alone David's, but that also of most if not of all saints, during some part of their Christian life. Have we not sometimes passed through it ourselves; and do we not find its best illustration in the book of our own memory, or perhaps in the feelings of our heart this morning?

1. *It is often the experience of the saint in his struggles with sin.* Old nature seems to have gained fresh strength. Old sins we imagined long since slain, revive. Rebel lusts we thought we had long ago nailed to the cross, appear in the field against us. The waters of iniquity we supposed securely dammed up, break out afresh, and we tremble lest we should be swept away before their power. A fresh revelation is made to us of the depravity of our own hearts. We hate the sins, and war against them. We abominate the iniquity of our hearts, and struggle against the tide; yet, despite all, we sometimes feel we are losing ground in the fight, and being carried on by the stream. Horror-struck, and dreading the very thought of a fall, we cry "Plead my cause, O Lord!"

> "Almighty King of saints,
> These tyrant lusts subdue:
> Drive the old serpent from his seat,
> And *all my powers renew.*"

And yet for the time our prayers seem unanswered; our corrupt nature seems no weaker, and the new man appears no stronger. Leave off fighting we dare not. Hoping for a rescue we still continue struggling on, until at last palsied with fear, and in our own strength "dead beat" we exclaim, "Lord, how long wilt thou look on? How trying an experience this is, only those know who have passed through it, or who perhaps are passing through it now; who have waited, and are waiting still for their Lord to put their foes beneath their feet.

2. It is frequently the *experience of the saint in relation to his troubles.* The religion of Jesus brings no exemption from trial; yea, often on the contrary, the holiest seem the most tried. Have we not all known some whose piety could never be doubted, and yet who always seemed walking under the deep shadow of some cloud; or to come nearer home, are there not some in this Tabernacle now, who do love the Lord with all their hearts, and are yet pressed almost beyond measure? Your experience has been a second Job's; you have scarcely realised one calamity before another has overtaken you; hardly escaped from one wave and just feeling the shore, before a larger billow has swept over your head. Losses, crosses, and bereavements, have followed one another, thick and fast. If the trial has not been in the body it has been in the family; if not in the family it has been in the business; if not in the business in something else. You (as we pictured David) have been sucked down by the strong eddies of life over and over again, always struggling to get on firm ground, yet always in the mid-stream of trouble. It is with a heavy heart you have come up to the house of God this morning, and that which perplexes you the most is, that God only seems to "look on." You have been expecting a rescue from on high for months and years. You have told many, "you are certain you will be helped out of all." You have encouraged your own heart many a time, in your efforts to encourage them, but the deliverance has not come yet. Things, if not worse with you, are quite as bad as ever. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." You have found it to be so, and with fainting spirit you are this morning crying out, "Lord, how long wilt thou look on?"

3. It is perhaps most often the *experience of the saint in relation to his prayers.* It is difficult to believe that delays are no denials. One came to me only the other day in great trouble about this very thing; she had herself been recently converted in this place, and had become, as was most natural, exceedingly anxious about her husband; he was at the time abroad, being a sailor. Full of the joy that faith in Jesus gives, she wrote and told him of the blessed change she had experienced, and besought him to seek the same: she never for a moment doubted but that the prayers accompanying the letter would be answered; anxiously did she wait for the return letter which was to confirm her hopes, and bitter was her disappointment when it arrived; it had never entered her thoughts that God might try her faith by keeping her waiting for a season ere the answer came; so she came to me to know ".what was she to do?" "What" I said "has your faith failed because your first attempt has not been crowned with success, why there will be scores in the Tabernacle next Sunday whose faith has not only received one rebuff, but hundreds, who are yet waiting and praying, praying and waiting." And is it not so? Are there not some here now, who have prayed and prayed again and again and yet "the heavens seem as brass" above them? Even the cloud "no bigger than a man's hand" has not yet risen. Over and over again, when you have felt more than ordinary power at the mercy-seat, you have arisen from your

knees and said "*now* I think I have it," and yet a few days have answered "*no*," and this has now lasted not for months only, but years. There are parents who pleaded for their children's conversion when they were but infants, and although the infants have grown to be men and women, the answer to those prayers is still in abeyance. Faith begins to stagger. Hope's beams grow pale, and an element of almost despair mingles in the oft-repeated cry. "Why doesn't he answer?" is the question asked a thousand times, each time with a deeper anguish. Trying indeed is the experience of the saint, who whilst praying with indomitable perseverance, yet feels as if his Lord only looked on, and often does the heart express its sorrow in the language of David, "Lord, how long?"

4. Lastly on this point. *It is often the experience of the servant of Christ.* Most humbly, and with deep gratitude to God from whom alone the blessing has come, I have this morning to acknowledge that such has not been my experience, whilst labouring in your midst. This is now the last month in my second year's pastorate, and I cannot but look back through the two years so nearly gone with wonder and thankfulness that defy language. God has been pleased to give us as a church such prosperity as is given to few, he has permitted us to reap with one hand while we have sown with the other. The converts are not numbered by tens only but by hundreds. In no spirit of pride do we say this; for what have we that we have not received? It is his work and his only, and at his feet we delight to cast all the glory. But whilst rejoicing in *manifest* success, we cannot but remember that there are hosts of God's servants, far holier and far more able, who have been called to toil and labour on with but little encouragement. How many there are whose studies have echoed with their sobs and prayers, whose voices have trembled with earnestness whilst imploring men "to be reconciled with God" and who have yet done scarce aught else than drive the plough and scatter the seed, without the joy of singing any great "Harvest Home." They are preparing the soil for others, and perhaps long after they have gone to their reward, some one else will "enter into their labours" and reap the corn which they scattered and watered with many a bitter tear. Such labour as this requires much grace. It is comparatively easy to work when the reward is given almost daily, when the tears are those of grateful joy, not of bitter disappointment; but to labour on and on and on, amid a thousand discouragements and but little to cheer is terribly hard. All honor to the men who do so, for of all the trials God's ministers are called to bear (and they are many) the greatest is to feel as if his Master were only a spectator of his labours, and only a looker-on upon his toil. Thus I have tried to show that David is not alone in this trial; but that it is shared and will be shared by saints in all ages. Let us now, and far more briefly, notice in the second place,

II. THE CRY OF ANGUISH. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and poor David could no longer restrain the cry,

"Lord, how long?" The soul feels it can no longer bear in silence the wearying suspense, its agony find vents in the exclamation "How long?" Now this cry is either right or wrong in accordance with the spirit in which it is uttered. It is unquestionably sinful when it is,

1. *The language of bitterness*, when the soul has become soured instead of sanctified by the affliction; when hard thoughts concerning God arise in the heart; when the soul ceases to say with Job, "Though he slay me yet will I trust him."

When the real interpretation of the cry is "Have not I waited long enough? What is the use of my waiting any longer; might I not just as well give up fighting, praying, or working altogether." This is the language of a rebel not of a child; and yet are there any present who would dare to say that such thoughts have never for a moment either entered or been harboured in the heart? Alas! Lord, yes! sometimes in the bitterness of our souls we have cried, "how long?

2. It is also wrong when it is *the language of deep despondency.* In this case the soul does not murmur against the dealings of God, it feels too acutely its utter unworthiness to receive the slightest tokens of his favour. It knows that were all its desires denied, it would be nothing more than it deserves: it feels that as Hell was its rightful desert, anything less than Hell must be a mercy, yet, at the same time, it longs for the blessing, the language of its heart is

"Lord, I hear of showers of blessing
Thou art scattering full and free;
Showers the thirsty land refreshing,
Let some droppings fall on *me.*
Even *me.*"

And when this blessing is delayed for some time, and the Lord only seems to "look on," its trembling faith is almost put to the rout. The frail flower droops its head, and the trembling heart exclaims, "Lord, how long wilt thou look on? I begin to fear that thou wilt never come, and that I shall die whilst thou art looking on." But it is a right cry when it is,

3. *The language of intense desire*, when it means "Lord, I have waited long, and am waiting still, and will wait thy time, however long it be. No harsh thoughts, Lord, have I toward thee, I know thou art

"Too wise to err, too good to be unkind."

I believe thou wilt come unto my rescue, I have no doubt of *that.* But oh, if it please thee, come *now*, even when my foes say, 'there is no help for him in God.' Lord, prove there is. Make mine enemies and thine, liars before thee. 'On cherub, and on cherubim,' ride royally

to my help. O God, arise, and scattered be let all these fears of mine. Thy servant waits, he prays, he fights, he works, and by thy help *will* still do so, but come, Lord, come, and shew that I am thy servant, let it be seen that thou art at my right hand; oh, vindicate thine honour, and declare"

"Thou art a God who hearest prayer."

"So shall this heart be made glad. Lord, hear this cry, "how long will thou look on?" Make haste to rescue me."

III. Thirdly, I will try and give some COMFORTING ANSWERS.

"Lord, how long wilt thou look on?" 1. Long enough, child, *to try your faith.* The Lord loves to strengthen the faith of his people, and faith gains strength by being put to a strain. The furious wind, that threatens to uproot the young sapling, only makes it strike its roots the deeper in the earth. The winter wind is as necessary for its stability as the summer's heat is for its growth. Our faith was never intended to be a hot house plant, but a giant tree bidding defiance to the storm. Anything, therefore, that puts our faith to the test is a blessing; to prove which I will quote a text well known, but generally misunderstood, "The trial of your faith being much more precious than gold." Now, how often is this text quoted to prove only the preciousness of faith, whereas it teaches much more; namely—that not only is faith precious, but faith's trial also; that the very fact of having our faith tested is no matter for sorrow, but rejoicing. Now the Lord looks on until he sees that the faith of his child has been sufficiently tried, and that the trial has sufficiently strengthened that faith. *Then* he works out a deliverance. May not this give the clue to the mystery of some present why the Lord has not helped before? He is "looking on" for the strengthening of your faith.

"Lord, how long wilt thou look on?" 2. Long enough *to teach you your own weakness.* There is still an immense amount of self ignorance in us all; particularly of our own weakness, and that weakness is only learnt in the painful school of experience. We think we can do this, and do that, and do the other, and nothing will persuade us of our mistake; so the Lord lets us try our own resources, and find out experimentally, that of ourselves we can do nothing; he watches our vain-glorious endeavours, and withholds his help, until beaten at every point, and our pride thoroughly humbled, we learn the truth of the text "without me ye can do nothing," then the lesson being taught, he no longer looks on, but rescues.

"Lord, how long wilt thou look on?" 3 Long enough *to make you value the deliverance.* That which is easily obtained is little valued. The longer the water is waited for, the sweeter it tastes: the greater the hunger, the greater the gratitude for food. The Lord

"waits to be gracious" in order to make us put a higher price upon his mercy. Soul long tried, thou wilt value thy Lord's deliverance when it comes, all the more for having so often cried "how long?"

"Lord, how long wilt thou look on?" 4. *Until the right moment.* Not a moment too soon for his own glory; not a moment too late for your good. Our clock is always too fast, we call upon the Lord and say "Lord, *now* is the time, the hour to deliver has struck:" but no answer comes, because he keeps not his time by ours; and his clock still wants some minutes to the hour; but when *that* has struck, swift as the lightning flash he is at our side; the tide of battle turns, the foemen melt away like mist before the rising sun; we are snatched in a moment from midstream, our feet are placed upon a rock, our goings are established, and a new song put upon our lips. Trust him then, believer, and even whilst thou cryest "Lord, how long?" obey the prophet's words.

"Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come."

May the Lord add his blessing to this word, for Jesus' sake—Amen.

Scripture read, Psalm xxxv.

Hymns sung from "Our own Hymn Book."—63 Part I—682—685.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

HE IS PRECIOUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORDS'-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 3RD, 1869, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious."—1 Peter 2—7.

THROUGH the sparing mercy of God, I have this day commenced the third year of my ministry in this place. It is impossible to look back upon the two years gone without the profoundest gratitude, great indeed have been the blessings received; far more than we could ever have ventured to expect. God has been pleased to show by the clearest proofs that the work in this place is His, and unto Him would we give the full sheaf of glory. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

During the two years, what changes have taken place in our midst. Faces once familiar are now seen no more; many voices that once joined with ours in sacred praise have been stilled in death; beloved ones who bowed with us in prayer are this evening bowing before the eternal throne in lowliest homage. The two years have not passed over this congregation without writing the word "change" upon its brow. Nor has the change been confined to the congregation as a whole; we have each and all personally come under its power. Not a single soul present is precisely what it was when first I came into your number, and, in the experience of a great many, how blessed has been the change effected even during the past year; you commenced eighteen hundred and sixty eight "without Christ" and "without hope;" when it dawned it found you in "gross darkness," but ere it closed God had "called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," and Christ who was to you "a root out of a dry ground" has now become the "chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely." The past year will ever be to you *the* year of your life, for in its months that change came which changed the heart from stone to flesh, changed the affections from self to Christ, and changed even in relation to you eternity itself from Hell to Heaven; a blessed change indeed which only sovereign grace could make.

But there has been something that even old Time itself has failed to alter—something that has defied all the powers of the great transformer. I refer to the believer's estimate of Christ. In degree, it

Thirdly, this text is a *very comforting one*, and not one whit less so than simple or searching. How many there are who fly to it as their one evidence that they are Christ's. Poor, trembling, timid souls, who know but very little of doctrine, who look up with awe to those I have just described and wish they knew one tenth as much, but who cling with the tenacity of a drowning man to this text. "Lord," they say "thou hast had it written that unto you which believe he is precious. I don't know much, Lord, but this I do know, and thou knowest it also, that Christ is very precious to my soul, then Lord may I not hope that I have believed on thee." Has not this been the language of many present, and are there not many here who look upon this test which may dread as their chiefest joy, and say "Yes, he is precious to me." I have heard somewhere of a poor girl who was being examined by a number of clerical dignitaries, in order to obtain some situation. She appeared to them very stupid and ignorant; question after question she could not answer, and getting more and more excited she only floundered on the worse; at last one of the clergymen in astonishment said "My dear girl, what *do* you know? The poor thing, with the color mounting up to her brow, stammered out "I—I know I do *love* Christ, and could die for him." Oh blessed knowledge worth more than all other! Cheer up, poor desponding heart, wipe away the tear from the eye, for as God's ambassador I declare that if you can say "Jesus is precious" you have the brightest and best evidence that you are his and he is yours.

Let us now in the second place,

II. VIEW THE TEXT AS THE SWEET EXPERIENCE OF THE SAINT.

Who is precious? Why *He* is. Unto the child of God, a personal living Christ is most dear. He is not satisfied with a mere love to Christ's doctrines, Christ's promises, or Christ's gifts, his affections entwine themselves round about his person; Jesus is to him his brother, friend, companion, the one with whom he walks and talks. How sad it is that so many fall short of this experience; their religion is entered more in a code of rules and collections of doctrines, than in the person of the dear Redeemer; they scarcely ever reach to the height of John's felicity, and let their head fall upon their Saviour's bosom; but if we are ever to attain to any high degree of spirituality of mind, or revel in any deep spiritual joy, it will only be as our religion gets more and more incarnated in Christ; and true growth in grace consists of a personal Saviour growing increasingly precious. Yes, "unto you which believe he is precious." Not only his house, for it is quite possible to like a person's house exceedingly, and yet have no particular love to the owner of that house. Not only his book, for there are many books you may enjoy in the reading, and yet have neither knowledge of, nor affection to, the author. Not only his gifts, for how many there are who while they value a man's gifts, despise him in their heart; but *He himself*, apart from all he gives, will be thy heart's dearest love.

"My God, I love Thee; not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love Thee not
Must burn eternally.

Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Not seeking a reward;
But as thyself hast loved me,
O ever-loving Lord."

Then if Christ be precious to you, everything about him becomes precious. *His name* becomes the sweetest music of the soul. It is impossible to love any one intensely without having their name endeared to you, not because of the name itself, but because of its associations; the name has become inseparably linked with the person, and its mention causes every heart-string to vibrate. *Jesus, Jesus*, was ever music as full of melody? Soft and sweet as "music stealing over the rippling waves" of some moon-lit lake. Do not ten thousand sweet emotions arise at its call. *Jesus*. Could we not repeat that word over and over again, and every time find a fuller harmony in it, until under its magic power the eyes begin to swim with tears of grateful love; the heart feels too big for the breast, and the lips are constrained to sing—

"*How sweet* the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear."

How about "Emmanuel?" Is not that name precious unto those of us who believe? "God with us." Surely

"Sweeter sounds than music knows,
Charm me in Emmanuel's name."

Time would fail, even to run over the glorious list of names whereby he is called, but concerning every one we should say "*that* name is precious." We read in Genesis that Pharoah placed on the hand of Joseph his own signet, and that gave to him a sovereign power. Beloved, the name of Jesus is our signet ring, and ever has been to saints of all ages. What was the power ot the Apostles? The name of Jesus. What is the power of this blessed Gospel? It is the signet ring of the name of Jesus that makes it "the power of God unto salvation." Why do our prayers, so cold and feeble in themselves, find acceptance and bring down into our souls innumerable blessings? Only because they bear the signet ring of the name of Jesus, and that all we ask is "for his sake."

Yes, blessed Jesus, thy name is precious to thy believing ones.

So, moreover, is *his person*. On this I have already briefly touched, but only as a whole. Let me go more into particulars. His person is precious, wherever, or in whatever condition, we behold it. Let us join company with the Magi and follow yonder glittering star. It stops over this manger, let us enter. Behold the young child nestled in its mother's arms. It is our Saviour. It is "the ancient of days." Oh, "holy child," we prostrate ourselves before thee and with the wise men worship, for in thy dawn, O Sun of Righteousness, thou art precious, and in thine opening bud, O, "Rose of Sharon," thou art sweet. Do we view him during his thirty years of sojourn here, still is he precious. Precious, when being weary, he sleeps in the hinder part of the vessel. Precious, when at the grave of Lazarus he weeps. Precious, when at the well side, he woos and wins the heart of the poor adulterous woman of Samaria. And how infinitely precious is he in his passion. O, come with me to-night into Gethsemane. How dark the shade of the olive grove; how cold the night air blows. Let

day of heaven on earth to us; the day when the great change came; well may we sing—

"Oh, happy day, that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour, and my God."

Ah! how precious was Christ to us then; often do we go back in remembrance to that moment, and wish we could always feel the transport of joy that was ours then. When is bread most precious? Why most certainly when the man is most famished for want of it. When does water taste the sweetest? Surely when it flows over lips that are dried and cracked through the lack of it. To see Jesus for the first time as our Saviour is to see the ocean opening a way from the Egypt of thraldom to the shore of freedom; is to see the water gushing from the desert rock; is to see the brazen serpent uplifted over a dying camp; is to see the life-boat coming through the surges, when our ship is bumping on the rocks. To see Jesus, is to see the pardon, when the rope is round the neck. The loveliest sight the eye of faith can behold is Jesus coming to our soul with forgiveness on his lip; pity in his eye; and a glittering crown in his hand. If ever He is indeed precious it is in the time of conversion. So also is he in *the day of trouble*. The preciousness of Christ is learnt best in the university of trial. O bear me witness, ye saints of God, that you never fully knew the preciousness of your Redeemer until you were stretched upon that bed of pain; until you spent your sabbaths in the wards of the hospital; until bereavement snatched the loved one from your side and drew a pall of gloom over all your earthly bliss; until friends began to fail you, and you were driven into closer communion with that friend "which sticketh closer than a brother." And, lastly, let me say, such also is *the dying day*. "We must die to sing of Christ." It is only Jesus who

"Can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are."

Wouldst thou know the preciousness of Christ? Then go and ask that aged, silver-haired saint who is just passing through the valley. He is dead to everything around him. Relations and friends are unnoticed; the most familiar names whispered in his ear fail to awaken any response. But stoop down and say gently "friend, is Jesus precious to you *now?*" Oh, see that smile that plays upon the aged lips; they open! He is about to speak! Listen! "Yes, he is precious, more precious than ever he was; precious, precious, precious Jesus," and he falls asleep in his Saviour's arms, with that smile which Christ's preciousness gave birth to, still upon the lip.

"Jesus! the vision of thy face
Hath overpowering charms;
Scarce shall I feel death's cold embrace,
If Christ be in my arms.
Then while ye hear my heart strings break,
How sweet the moments roll;
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory on my soul."

"Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious." Is he to you?

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

SERMON TO YOUNG MEN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 14TH, 1869, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Run, speak to this young man."—ZECHARIAH 2—4.

THIS young man was the prophet Zechariah, who in early life had his lips touched with a live coal from off the altar, and on whom in youth the spirit of prophecy descended. He lived at the time when the captivity was drawing near its close, and the chief burden of his eloquence was encouragement to the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. In the verses preceding the text we are told that he was in conversation with an angel; whom he describes "as the angel that talked with him." Whilst thus engaged he lifted up his eyes and saw another angel in the form of a man, with a measuring line in his hand. There can, I think, be little doubt but that this second angel was none other than the Lord Jehovah Jesus, "the angel of the covenant," who with his measuring line of sovereign grace, marks out and prescribes the exact limits of his church, which is the spiritual Jerusalem.

The angel in converse with the prophet hastens forth to meet his Lord, and receives the following mandate, "Run, speak to this young man," and then words are given him to say. Let us this evening leave the context, and only dwell upon the command. Zechariah is not the only young man that needs speaking to; nor is an angel the only one permitted to carry the message. Certain I am of this that I am no angel, although I trust some day to mingle with the shining band; and equally certain am I that the Lord has said to me to-night, "Run, speak to this young man."

It was a message sent on a special occasion to a specified young man, and in this light we intend to view it.

And is not this a special occasion? Do we not as a church feel that the annual sermon to young men demands special prayer, and awakens expectations of special blessings? Marvellously has God blessed them in the two former years, having owned them to the conversion of over one-hundred, of whom we have either heard or seen. And why not to-night? His power is the same as ever. He says, "Call upon me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

No. 5.—[*Sixth Edition.*]

"Lord, we have, we do call on thee now, make bare thine arm and this night outdo all former mercies."

My division will be very simple, and will consist of questions that arose in my heart whilst pondering over the text. The Lord said to me, "Run, speak to *this* young man," and I asked, "*Lord, which one?*" Let this question be our first topic. "*Why should I speak to him?*" This was my second question, so it shall be our second division. "*But why should I run?*" Let this be our third head, and I will close by asking the question. "*And when I catch him up, Lord, what shall I say to him?*"

The Lord has said to me, "speak to *this* young man," but behold what a number there are here. How am I to get the ear of the right one? How make him feel the message personal? Lord, which one? First, *this one.* I see him sitting there yonder; he is the son of godly parents, he was nursed in the lap of piety, and cradled in prayer; ten thousand holy influences have surrounded him like a heavenly atmosphere; if he gives play to memory to-night, and lets it go back to its utmost limit, he will see in the dim haze of the past, a loving face bending over him as he rests in the child's cot; he will remember that those mother's lips said something about "loving Jesus," and from that moment right down to the present time the silken cords of a mother's influence have drawn heavenward. He cannot remember the time when he had no serious thoughts. He has never dared to join the scoffer or the profligate. He is in the general acceptation of the word a *good* fellow. The home is all the brighter when he is in it. The parents all the happier for his presence. His sisters have not a word to say against him, but constantly declare that "he is as kind a brother as they could wish to have." Well, dear friend, I am glad to hear so good a testimony about you; but don't think you are excepted in my Lord's command, for he has said to me, "Run, "speak to *this* young man." "Is he, Lord, the only one?" No, "speak to *this* young man," the one upon the top of the staircase there. Ah, I see him now. His experience has been a very different one from the last. No prayers ever arose on his behalf; no holy influences ever surrounded him; his earliest remembrances are oaths, curses, and sabbath excursions; his companions he has been left to find for himself in the streets; and if ever any impression was made on him in some ragged school he may have entered, it was at once removed when he entered his home again. He is a true subject for our pity and sympathy. His sins are more the sins of his bringing up than anything else. Friend, I welcome you, I rejoice you have been induced to come into our number to-night. Don't think there is no part of the service for you, for my Master has said, "Run, speak to *this* young man."

"Are there any more, Lord, I have to speak to?" "Yes, *this* one. He is a young man of considerable mental ability, who is fast making his way in the world. By the way, that is what he always said he meant to do. A bright future seems to be opening up before him. It needs no great spirit of prophecy to foretel his future state to be one of affluence. If he does not have success he is determined it shall be through no lack of energy and activity on his part. He is planning to-morrow's engagements now. Young man, I want your attention

to-night. I must have it, for the Lord has told me to run and speak to you as well as others. Sitting to his right hand I see another I have to address. He is of a very different stamp of character. I thought I heard him say just now, "Well, thank goodness, I'm no money-grub. I don't care so much about getting on in life as *seeing* life." When he came up the steps in front, one or two said "The idea of *him* coming;" and well they might, for his face is a great deal more familiar in the theatre and music hall, than in the sanctuary. He is one of the "young men of the period," about whom we have heard so much lately. His motto is "begone dull care;" aye, by any means so long as it goes. We don't say there is any malice about him, but only that he is a light frivolous pleasure seeker. I am very glad to see you friend, you are the right one to come, for the Lord has said to me, "Run, speak to *this* young man." But who is that one standing among the crowd around that gallery door? Well, I must out with the truth. He is one who has spurned every entreaty, and mocked every warning. He is bringing his old father's grey hairs down to the grave more rapidly than time could. His mother they say died of consumption, but the truth is he killed her by breaking her heart. He has leapt over every barrier that love has flung across his path. He seems to have made up his mind to reach hell at all hazards; he seems positively to be in a hurry to be damned. Ah, sir, I cannot tell what has brought you here this evening, perhaps to scoff and make our word a subject for future merriment. But at all events this I can tell you, that you must give me your ear, whether you will or no, for the Lord has marked you out, and said, "Run, speak to *this* young man."

Are these all, Lord? No, there is one more. He sits right back and tries to keep out of sight. He is a seeking sinner. Has been so for some time. All the way here he kept praying, "Lord, save me to-night. O, this night give me peace in Jesus." Blessed be God there are many such present. During the past week many are the letters I have received from anxious ones, saying they hoped to be here, and asking for prayer that this night the set time to favour them might come. Cheer up, poor desponding heart, for my Lord has told me, whoever else I may omit, not to forget you. Mercy is waylaying you, and has commanded me to run and speak to *this* young man.

I want, in a word, to speak to every young man present, and so to speak, that he shall feel that he alone is being spoken to. The Lord help you to recognise yourself in one of the characters described, and take home the message to your own heart, not as the word of man, but of God. So much then for the first question. "*Which one?*" The second question my heart asked was,

II. WHY SHOULD I SPEAK TO HIM? To this question three answers at once came. 1. *Speak to him because danger awaits him.* The very least we can do for a man in peril is to arouse him to a sense of danger if he be ignorant of it. Humanity itself will dictate this.

Playing on that sandbank are a number of thoughtless ones. They notice not that the tide is on the flow; that between them and the shore there is already the incoming water, deepening every minute. The water is by slow but sure degrees encroaching on the bank; let it once flow over and the treacherous sand will sink beneath their feet,

and without a single warning the whole laughing company will be entombed.

Am I to stand upon the shore wondering whether I am predestinated to give the alarm? Out upon such nonsense. My duty is clear, and that is to sing out with all my strength, "Beware, beware! the tide is coming in; the tide is coming in; come ashore while there is time." This is just my position to-night. I see before me a mass of young men upon the sandbank 'time.' Some are engaged about one thing, some about another, but all equally forgetful that the tide is coming in. Do you ask 'what tide?' I answer the tide of 'eternity' is upon the flow. Its waters are licking away your standing ground. With some of you its waves are breaking at your very feet. "Ahoy there! Come to the rock while there is time; to Jesus come away." Your danger says to me, "Run, speak to this young man." Do you see that magnificent steamer ploughing its way through the ocean. Do you mark the snowy 'wake' it leaves behind. Who on board has a single fear. I can hear the merry laugh of the passengers; but let me tell you it is out of its course, and right ahead is a sunken rock, over which the water just gently flows. Another five minutes and the vessel will hurl itself with a crash to ruin. "Down with the helm—port her —turn astern." Never mind frightening the crew, better do that than all be lost, through want of warning.

Young men, I can see many of you going right ahead upon the rocks. Enough water to hide them, but not enough to tide you over. Shall I stand with folded arms and silent lips for fear your nerves should be shocked, No! your danger says "lift up your voice like a trumpet and warn them, or have their blood upon your head.' Rocks ahead, sinner!! Rocks ahead!! Down on your knees!! Stop! turn your course!! God save you from eternal shipwreck, for his own mercy's sake. Because of your danger my Master says, "Run, speak to this young man."

2. *I am bound to speak to you, because one wrong step will lead to many.*

Whilst meditating on this portion of this evening's sermon, I thought I saw as I sat in my study two roads; they differed from one another in every respect; the one was broad and pleasant to behold, its appearance for the first few steps was attractive; but I noticed on looking along it that its character soon changed, that it abounded in quagmires and pits, and ended in perdition. The other was straight as a line, and rather rugged in its nature than otherwise, but I observed that from its very commencement you could see its end, which was a celestial city, entered by gates of pearl. I observed, moreover, that the two roads branched out in their different directions from this Tabernacle, and that standing at their juncture was a crowd of some five hundred young men. Amazed, I waited to see which road the multitude would take, and whilst observing the greater number turn their faces toward the broad road, I heard a voice say, "Run, speak to this young man." Dropping the simile, let me say, dear friends, it is a fact. The roads *do* meet here to-night. The decisive step *will* be taken by some this evening. The scales that have been quivering in the balance will now turn, either one way or the other. Oh! stop, young man, stop; and

before the fatal step is taken, let me tell you that as certainly as you hear my voice to-night, so certainly does the broad road of sin lead to destruction, and the straight road of faith in Jesus to life everlasting. How solemn the thought that the step on which all eternity hangs may be taken by some before this evening's service is over; the one step which will insure all the others until Hell is reached made to-night; surely this thought is sufficient to make us, "run and speak to this young man.

3. *Speak, for if you do not there are many that will.* No one knows the temptations that surround young men, but a young man. If there are but few to lead him right, there are plenty to lead him astray. He is encompassed with preachers of the wrong sort. "Speak to him," says my master, "for if you don't, *godless companions* will. There are plenty to fill his ears with lies, if you do not with truth. What with worldly associates and worldly chums, open scoffers and professing infidels, he will never want a leader to perdition. They have his ear six days out of seven, therefore speak to him while you may." Then, too, he has the attractive preacher called *the world*, who like some fair siren seated on a rock by the deadly pool, smiles but to deceive, only sings to lure, kisses but to betray, and then flinging her arms around his neck, leaps with him into Hell. "Speak to him," still my Lord says, "for if you do not *Satan will.*" And he is now. The black preacher of the pit is gliding from pew to pew, from ear to ear. He says to yonder young man, who is rather impressed, "Oh never mind, it is only a special sermon to young men, you will feel all right again when you get outside; it is only his business; he gets his living by frightening people; go and see friend so-and-so after the service, and have a laugh about it." Oh, stop your ear to his accursed counsel, for my message from the Lord of hosts is, "Run, speak to this young man."

III. WHY SHOULD I RUN? You will see from the text that I am not only to go, but go quickly; not to walk, but to run to the young man. Speed, and that the greatest, is to be used. No grass is to be allowed to grow beneath my feet. All delay is forbidden—all haste commanded. "Run—run," says the mandate. Why? 1. *Because he is running.* Sinners never creep to ruin. Slow as the tortoise are we on the road to heaven; swift as the bounding stag to hell. The road to perdition is down-hill all the way. The natural heart which is so heavy a load heavenward, lends a tremendous impetus to our downward course. It is truly wonderful to notice the giant strides that many will make in sin even in one year. Proficiency in this is soon learnt. The feet turned from God are winged; or to use another illustration, the sinner is not being carried along by so placid a stream that we can stroll along the bank and quietly talk to him as we walk; but *he is in the rapids*; his bark is being whirled along with an impetuosity which makes us hold our breath for fear; it darts with the velocity of an arrow that has only just left the string. If we would speak to him at all we must run, and speak to him too as we run.

2. *Because time is running.* Time is a ship that never casts anchor—an eagle that is ever on the wing—a shuttle that always flies—an ocean that never ebbs. Whether we eat or drink, walk or sleep, it matters not; whether day shines or midnight casts its gloom, it is the

same; on, on it stalks with measured tread, and none can hinder or hold it back. Stop the pendulum of yonder clock whose tick we hear, and time only laughs as it sweeps on. Our life is being ticked out and eternity ticked in by a pendulum no hand but God's can stay.

"Time is earnest, passing by,"

and its voice to us is "*Run*, speak to this young man."

3. *Run because opportunities are running.* I have read somewhere that some years back the water of a river was swollen to a flood. A man who had much valuable timber was afraid it was in danger of being swept away, so he ventured with a light boat into the mad current, if possible to save it; hoping to keep sheltered from the full force of the stream under the lea of a projecting shore. Vain hope—he was drawn into the rushing tide, and in a moment was at the mercy of the wild torrent. A friend saw his peril, and saw also there was only one way of saving him, so mounting a fleet horse, he plied his spurs and made for a bridge a short distance below; reaching the bridge before the light craft which came like an arrow toward the arch, he dropped a rope over to the surface of the stream, and then called out to the man to seize it as his only chance. The trembling hand was stretched forth, the rope was grasped, the boat sped on from under him to ruin, but the man was saved. Young man, such is my position to-night. I have tried, at my Lord's command, to run, and blessed be his name, I have reached the bridge before you; I let down the rope which reaches to your very hands, it is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Lay hold on it, man! lay hold!! maybe this is the last opportunity I shall ever have of offering you the gospel, or you of receiving it. To-night's service will perhaps be to some present the last bridge of mercy across the stream—the closing opportunity; God help you to lay hold of the rope now while it touches the stream, for it never may be within your reach again.

4. *Run, because death is running.* The grim despot is after every one of us, nothing can turn his course, he laughs all bribes to scorn, and every moment he gains upon us; his scythe swings with the speed of the lightning flash, and never grows blunt in its work. Who next in this great crowd shall fall before its stroke is known but to one. It may be the speaker; the eyes that now gaze upon you, wondering which among this multitude will to-night be saved may be glazed in death the first; the voice that speaks may be hushed on earth for ever, before to-morrow dawns. Or it may be *you* or *you*. To all it comes, therefore I must run to speak. God has just taught us as a people a solemn lesson. Three weeks ago as fine a sailor as ever put foot on deck came to our Saturday prayer meeting, he sent in a special request for prayer that he might be enabled to live in Christ and show his colours during a long voyage he was about to take. Just a week ago, when the gale blew so furiously, the ship *Calcutta* met with that terrible collision, the harrowing account of which doubtless most of us have read. The mate of the *Calcutta* was thrown down in the crash and half-killed, a huge wave then swept him overboard, and he sank to rise no more until the resurrection morning. That mate was the same man who was at our prayer meeting. Death came riding on the south-west gale. The billows rolled fast, but death outstripped them and dragged

his prey beneath. Thank God, we believe he is safe. His prayer that he might reach his "desired haven" has been answered, though differently from what we all expected: and now in all affection would we commend his widow and little ones to Him who is the "God of the fatherless." But, friend, suppose it had been you instead of him. How then? The same swift-footed death is after each and all, and therefore I am to "Run, and speak to this young man."

5. *Run, because Hell is running.* We read in the book of Revelation that death rode forth on a white horse and hell followed after, to every impenitent sinner the two go together. Oh, sirs, we should not be in such earnestness about you, nor have these special Sermons were it not for death's attendant. If, when you die, you died like dogs, if death were only an annihilation, we had no need to run to you. But, sinner, all hell is up in chase; the damned spirits of the pit pursue you; perdition yawns and opens its fiery mouth to receive you; the hounds of hell are on the scent. Well may we run, and with weeping eyes exclaim, back sinner! Back! For Heaven's sake, back! For eternity's sake back! To the cross of Jesus fly, for only *there* hell dare not touch you. Surely here are reasons enough why I should run. You are running. Time is running. Opportunities are running. Death is running. Hell is running. May mercy also run, and that to you to-night. And now in the fourth and last place I asked the question.

IV. AND WHEN I CATCH HIM UP, LORD, WHAT SHALL I SAY TO HIM? I thank God I have caught up so many to-night. Here I have you within sound of my voice. I have tried (alas how poorly I feel) to run after you, and now may my master guide me to speak aright. Let me address you in the same order in which I tried to describe you at the commencement of the sermon.

Son of pious parents, with many a noble, amiable quality, let me say this word to you, "Your morality will not save you." Unless you are 'born again,' you will be as much lost as if you never possessed any. Think not I speak harshly; it is only in love, but believe me there is as much need for conversion in you as in the case of the grossest sinner present. Thank God you have been restrained from many a sin others have fallen into, but do not rest on *that*. Nothing short of simple faith in Christ saves. With all your morality, you must just come as a sinner to Jesus, and as such trust him.

Young man, you who have had nought but evil example from infancy, to you let me speak. Do not think that frees you from responsibility. Your parents' sins will not exonerate you from yours. If they led, you have willingly followed. Remember, too, you can no longer plead ignorance as to the way of salvation, for you have just heard it, if never before. Listen yet again. Jesus died for sinners; being God as well as man, his atonement is of infinite value; sufficient to save all who trust it. He invites *you* to come to him, and declares he will never cast you out. If as a sinner you trust him to-night, then to-night you will be saved. Oh, blessed, simple gospel.

Young man, so occupied in getting on in this world, I will just ask you one question, and leave you to give the answer. It is this—"What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul." Poor

pleasure seeker, I would that I could undeceive you. You are being duped. The world itself laughs at you. You are flinging away happiness, not getting it. As a young man who knows a little of what the world is, I tell you there is no pleasure it can give worthy to be compared with the joys that flow from the cross of Jesus.

"'Tis religion that can give,
Sweetest pleasure while we live."

Young man, you who have hardened your neck in sin, and are running a steeple chase to hell, leaping every barrier, just a solemn word to you. The day is fast coming when you will be unable to despise those mother's prayers; the day when they shall add their deep 'Amen' to your damnation. Laugh at them now if you are mad enough, but as God's ambassador I declare that if you die unsaved, they shall be as a millstone round your neck, to drown you deeper in perdition.

Poor anxious seeker, I will close with a word to you. Your very anxiety to be saved is God's work. Your broken heart is not despised by him, for he has broken it on purpose to bind it up. In your letters you said, "Would that I could find the way to peace." Then behold it in a bleeding Saviour. Cast your longing soul just as it is on him. From this 14th of February rest your whole soul's eternal interest on him, and you are saved.

And now, Lord, I have tried to do as thou hast bid me, but to save is thine alone. Results I leave with thee. O Divine Master, arise, and from thy throne of mercy "Run," and speak *thyself* to these young men, and they shall live. Lord, *do*, for thine own honour's sake.—Amen.

Scripture Read, Luke 14th to 23rd verse.
Hymns sung from "Our own Hymn Book."—552—450—550.

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ARCHIBALD G. BROWN.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SERMON

DELIVERED BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

(OF STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE)

IN AID OF THE FUNDS OF THE

Christian Blind Relief Society.

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21st, 1869.

"And he cometh to Bethsaida, and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town, and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up and said, I see men as trees walking. After that, he put his hands again upon his eyes and made him look up, and he was restored, and saw every man clearly."—St. Mark viii. 22, 25.

A scene of wild desolation presents itself to the view of the solitary traveller as in his journey he passes round about the region of Galilee, skirting the lake of Gennesaret. All about that inland sea where once there used to be busy villages, there is now nothing to be seen on every hand but ruin. We are told by eye witnesses that if you skirt that lake where Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida once stood, you will see nothing but ruined foundations, fallen walls, masses of masonry heaped together, and the whole intermingled with thorns and briars. You might walk through that region and imagine you were in the land of the dead. No settled inhabitants live there, but now and then may be seen the tent pitched by some wandering Arab.

The words of our Lord have come true; the prophecy has been fulfilled; the judgment has descended. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin. Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of Judgment than for you."

One has but to gaze upon the scene of utter desolation, where once these favored cities stood, to learn that when Christ pronounces a "Woe," ruin must inevitably follow. Christ's curse is not only sufficient to wither a figtree, but blast the fairest landscape. But at the time of the narrative recorded in the chapter, *that* woe had not come. Instead of being a ruin, Bethsaida was a quiet fishing village, as its name implies, and nestled among the hills of Galilee, close down by the waters of the lake of Gennesaret. Its inhabitants earned their living by fishing in those waters, generally so calm, but at times so troubled. This village is better known as the village of Andrew and Peter than for its trade; so true is the old Jewish saying "It is not the place that gives honour to the man, but the man who gives honour to the place." And just as Bethlehem is best known as being the birthplace of our Lord, so is Bethsaida best known as the place where He, in his compassionate love, took the poor blind man by the hand, and in answer to the prayer of his friends, gave him sight.

Now this evening we want, by the Master's help, to look upon this miracle as an illustration of the way in which the Lord brings sinners to himself. We shall, therefore, first,—*look upon the man as an illustration of the state of every sinner by nature*—secondly, *the man's friends as a good example*—they brought him to Christ—thirdly, *Christ's dealings with the blind man as illustrative of his dealings with all sinners who come to Him*—and we shall close by observing that—*the experience of this man was identical with the experience of every man who receives mercy from the Lord.*

LET US VIEW THE MAN FIRST. The news has reached Bethsaida that the Saviour is coming, and the moment he arrives, there is a large crowd gathered round about him. I can see a group pushing their way along the street, and who is that man in the centre? He is supported on either side, and his supporters are hurrying him along as if it were their intention to be the first to meet the Saviour. What is the matter with the man? He walks the same, and looks the same at a distance as the others. Look closely into him, and you will perceive the difference. The man is stark blind, and the crowd of friends are leading him as fast as possible, that he who was anointed to open the eyes of the blind, may open this man's.

I said there was only one difference between him and them, but *such* a difference, though not greater than there is between many who

are here to-night. The difference was that the others saw while this man did not. To the others all was light, to this man all was darkness. It mattered not to him whether the sun shone, or whether night cast its sable pall over all It was of little consequence to him whether the lake sparkled in the sunshine, or whether the storm cloud rested on the neighbouring hills; all was a dead blank to him; dark, dark, terribly dark! How striking a picture is this of the sinner. The man was blind to two things. If there was any deformity of ugliness he did not see it, and with objects of beauty it was just the same. It mattered not if there was loathsomeness or loveliness before him for he saw neither. Just so exactly is it with the sinner in his natural state. In its loathsomeness the sinner does not see his own sin, nor does he behold his own defilement before God. Do not call him a hypocrite, for he is not one; he only utters what he feels when he says, "I don't see that I am so bad after all." Of course he does not; if he did, he would not be blind; but as he is so, he is ignorant as to his true state before God. Equally blind is he also to the loveliness there is in Jesus. This is as much a hidden thing to him as his own deformity. Many of you can say with all your heart,

Lord let me see thy beauteous face,
It yields a heaven below,
And angels round the throne will say,
Tis all the heaven they know.

A glimpse, a single glimpse of thee,
Would more delight my soul
Than this vain world, with all its joys,
Could I possess the whole.

But such language is an unknown tongue to the blind sinner, for he sees no beauty in him why he should desire him. The reason why people are so ignorant of spiritual things is because they are blind. What a ridiculous answer was that of Nicodemus to our Lord when he said, "How can a man be born when he is old, can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born!" The man said this I believe in all simplicity, but it was a striking illustration of the fact that until the spirit gives light, the most simple truths of Jesus are utterly hidden from the natural man's eyes.

The Earl of Chatham went once to hear Cecil the preacher, and the topic was "The spirits work in the believer." After the sermon was over, the Earl said to a friend, "I did not understand a word of it; I could not make out what he was driving at; do you think there were any in the building who knew what he was talking about?" "Yes" said the friend "there were many illiterate men, women and children, who understood him." "Well" said the Earl, "I could not," and so there may be some here whose intellects may be never so vigorous, whose education may have been of a superior kind, but who are

witnesses of the fact, that mere education and talent will never teach a man spiritual things. Blind! Blind! stark blind is the condition of every soul by nature, until Jesus applies his hand to the eyes, and then the sinner sees Remember the blind man is *just as blind when in the light as in the dark;* put him in the dark and it is no darker to him. Let him sit in the full meridian blaze of the sun and it is no lighter. The evil is not in what surrounds him, but is in himself. That man is just as blind who stands in the light of the sun, as he who sits in a dark room. I will grant you they are in a bad case who have not the light, but I will also go farther, and say that you who are surrounded by it, and are yet blind are just as bad. The fact of being surrounded by light does not give sight, and there are thousands in England who are just as ignorant of Divine things as the Hottentot, or as the man mentioned in our text was insensible to light. To come nearer home, there are some who have heard the truth preached in this place continually, and yet are as blind as if they had never heard the truth declared. It is not the question whether the light is round about us, but whether we have the eyes to behold it.

Remember too a *blind man may do much of the work of a man who sees.* Have you ever been in the Blind School and watched the busy fingers of the scholars? You would scarcely know they were blind; you see one stitching here, and the other engaged in some other employment there, and you feel that it does not much matter to them in their work whether they see or not; and is not this a picture of many professors? Come with me to yonder Sabbath School, you see the teachers all equally engaged with their classes, and yet that one over there is quite blind, and has never seen spiritual things; I fear that if all were called to leave the Church's ranks who are in a similar condition they would be marvellously decimated. How solemn is the thought, that even in our pulpits, there are many who have not yet received sight! You may hear a blind man through what he has heard from others describe the beauties of the rainbow and paint in language the loveliness of the rose. A Milton may entrance us with the beauty of his descriptions of light, while he has to exclaim as his own experience.

> "O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of morn,
> Irrevocably dark, total eclipse,
> Without all hope of day!"

Do you think there are no blind ministers in England, who preach and talk about the glorious rays of the "Sun of Righteousness" and yet have never seen them. It must be a sad sight indeed to see a blind father trying to lead his sightless children, but it is a far more melancholy spectacle to see a man, who is himself as blind as a post about spiritual things, trying to direct a number of other imperishable souls, "shall they not both fall into the ditch?" O, think not friend because you are a minister, Sunday school teacher, or tract distributor, that you are safe, for I tell you it is possible to be engaged in all these works and yet be blind.

But although a blind man may talk and act as if he saw, it is yet *impossible for him if he be born blind,* (and all sinners are) *to have any true knowledge of these subjects,* and he can hardly talk much without betraying his ignorance, Mr. Locke in his writings mentions a striking instance of this fact. A blind man after much enquiry and reflection said he had found out what sort of a colour scarlet was, and on being questioned replied; "I think scarlet is something like the sound of a trumpet." You smile friends, but there are many who have just such an appreciation of spiritual truths; unless a man has been enlightened from above, he can have no more idea of spiritual truth than a blind man has of colour. But there is just this difference between the two; *the spiritually blind do not believe they are so,* while the poor blind know they are and feel it, you need not say to them "brother, you are blind," for he would say "I know that better than you do," but if you speak to the spiritually blind and tell them of their condition, they turn round and say "No," "its a want of sight on your part." He is the most terribly blind who is blind to his own blindness; and he is the most hopelessly blind who the most persistently declares he never was.

II. I WANT YOU TO OBSERVE THE CONDUCT OF THIS MAN'S FRIENDS, AS A GOOD EXAMPLE. They brought him to Jesus. I am sure that the sight which was witnessed at Bethsaida has often been witnessed in Heaven by the angels. I think I can see a troop of prayers ascending to the throne, and amongst them is that of an aged mother, and its cry is "Lord, give sight to my blind boy;" and there is the wife's prayer, that too, finds its way to Heaven, and the burden of it is, "Lord, give sight to my blind husband." It is a blessed thing, beloved, that in the arms of prayer we can bring the blind to Jesus, if we can do nothing else with our friends and relations, let us see that we do this, for how can we be clear of their blood, unless we have borne them in the arms of vehement prayer before God; laid them at his feet and said "Lord, give them sight." And not only can we bring them to Jesus in prayer, but *we can bring them to where He passes by.* The great desire of the blind man's friends was to bring him into the road along which they believed Christ would walk. Wherever you hear of souls being brought to Christ there you may be sure the Lord has passed by. Why was it so many of you tried to bring so many friends to this place last Sabbath to hear the Special Sermon to Young Men. Was it not because you remembered how wonderfully the Lord had passed by on similar occasions in the past, and you expected him to do so again? There is yet another thing in which they set us a bright example, and that is *in their faith,* "they brought the blind man and besought Him to *touch him.*" They believed a touch from the Saviour was all that was required. Have faith in God, that He is able to convert your relations and friends and to give sight to the blind. Believe that his touch is all sufficient and that what is much for you to receive is nothing for him to perform.

III. LET US NOW NOTICE IN THE THIRD PLACE CHRIST'S DEALING WITH THE BLIND MAN, AS ILLUSTRATIVE OF HIS DEALING

WITH EVERY SINNER. What was the first thing the Saviour did with the blind man after he was brought to him? "He took him by the hand." I can imagine how that blind man started. He had doubtless often heard of Christ being able to open the eyes of the bliud, and he now stood trembling, wondering what would be done to him. But before he had much time to think, a hand took hold of his. It was Jesus. Oh! how inexpressibly sweet is the thought, that the first thing that Jesus does to the anxious sinner, is to take him by the hand. Cannot you, my friends, remember that time when Jesus first began to work on your heart; the preacher's words struck home, and you thought he had been told all about you, or had been reading all your thoughts. As the service went on you felt "that man is praying for me as if I was praying myself. I could not have laid my comdition before the throne better." That friend was Jesus taking you by the hand and making you feel his presence; conversion, in a word is Christ laying hold of the sinner; a blessed contact between an empty sinner and a full Saviour. Notice, moreover, *Christ made the first overture;* he did not stand with folded arms waiting for the blind man to stretch forth his hand. He would never have done it. No, he stepped up to the man, and took his hand. That is just what Christ does in conversion. He always makes the first step, and gives the first grasp of the hand. "We love him because he first loved us," and if there be any desire in your heart to be saved, it is only because Christ has put out his hand, just as he did to this blind man, and given you the warm pressure of affection and love. The second thing he did was *to lead him out of the town, far from the busy hum of the multitude, so that they might be alone.* And so the sinner is made to feel alone with his Saviour. Does he read the truth in God's word? Every verse seems to speak directly to him. Does he hear tell of the judgment day? He feels as if there was nobody standing before the great white throne but himself. Does he hear of Jesus hanging on the tree? He feels "Christ was crucified" "for me," "for me". When he comes to pray, it is not "Lord have mercy upon *us*," but "Lord have mercy upon *me*, a sinner." It may be selfish, but it is a blessed selfishness. Oh! I would thank my Lord if he would take some of you by the hand and lead you outside the city, make you forget the crowd assembled here, and only feel that you are alone with him. We read that "*he spat on the blind man's eyes.*" He did this to teach us that he opens blind eyes by the most unexpected ways; through means that would be despised by the philosophers of the day, The Gospel is the most humiliating thing possible; it lays man's pride in the dust, and only saves him as a hell-deserving sinner; consequently it is despised by the self-righteous, and laughed at by the proud philosopher, and yet it is by this very Gospel that the Lord saves his people. The despised simplicity of the Gospel is still the means God uses in preference to all others. You will find too, tha sinners are generally converted in just the way they did not expect, and by the instrumentality they most derided. Jesus spat on his eyes—but the virtue did not come from the spittle, but from *the putting on of his hands.* It is not the means used, but the Lord's blessing on them.

The preacher may preach the truth, and nothing but the truth, and that with all earnestness. The teacher may teach Jesus and Him only, and that with tears; but unless the Divine Master of both place his hands upon the blind, no miracle of grace can be effected.

IV. LET US VIEW THIS MAN'S EXPERIENCE AS IDENTICAL WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SINNER. He says *I see.* What did he see? Well true he did not see very much or very clearly, but still "I see" even in any degree was a thing he had not been able to say before. "I see;" oh! blessed words, however limited in their application. "I see" says the sinner "if not Christ as my Saviour, yet my need of him as such." "I see if not that I am saved, yet that I am lost." "I see my foulness, if not my scarlet sins removed." "I see I am on the road to hell, if I see not the heavenly gates before me," can'st thou say thus much, sinner? then thank God for it, for the first step towards being saved is to feel yourself lost, and the first step towards Heaven is made when the soul sees it is within a step of hell. But this man's sight was *a very confused one,* "he could scarcely tell the difference between a man and a tree," "it is a man for it moves," "he cries" "no, its too big for a man, it must be a tree," he argues. It is not to be expected that the man whose eyes have only just been opened, should see with anything like the distinctness of the man who has long gazed upon the light. Do not expect young converts to see as much as you who have been brought to the light many years. They cannot understand all they see; but if they can only see "men as trees walking," it is something to thank God for. I know who the blind man saw first—it was Christ. He was standing before him, and the first person his eyes lighted on was Jesus. What is the first thing the sinner sees? Surely Jesus, for there is none other near. And then our text tells us, "He put His hands again upon his eyes," and made him *look up,* "and he was restored, and saw every man clearly." It was not "look down;" no light can come from earth, it was not "look within," for that would be as fruitless; but "look up," and he saw every man clearly. Now, come, poor sinner, *look up* to Calvary's tree, and see Him who hangs there suffering for thee, and then *look up* and behold Him sitting on the Father's right hand pleading your cause. The Lord help you to find peace, and that you will only do by "looking up." Look out of self, look away from the creature; look up to Jesus, look to his blood for cleansing, look to his wounds for a refuge, look to his death for an atonement, look to his spotless life for thy righteousness, look to his exaltation for thy security. In a word, look to Jesus for all and everything, and keep on "looking up" poor anxious one, until you do see. Does Satan say, "you are too far gone in sin to hope,"—"look up." Does unbelief mutter in your ears, "it is of no use,"—"look up" "From this evening forth, let your whole life be one continual looking up," and then shalt thou see clearly Jesus as thy glorious Saviour, and heaven as thy future, eternal, happy home. If you forget every other word that has been spoken to-night; oh! remember this, "look up," "look up," for

"There is life for a look at the crucified one,
There is life at this moment for thee;
Then look—sinner, look unto him and be saved,
Unto him who was nailed to the tree."

The Lord help you to, even now, for Jesus' sake.

The Society whose claims I would plead to-night is the Christian Blind Relief Society. Last Year I preached a Sermon on its behalf and £15 14s. was collected. I hope the friends on this occasion will respond as nobly as they did before, and help one of the best Societies in London, a Society that deserves to be supported twenty times better than it is, I ask you who have sight, "how if you had not?" Fathers, suppose your children were unable to see you; Mothers, if you could not see the little ones you love, how then?" Therefore by the greatest earthly blessing you possess I ask you, *the blind ask you* to assist in every way to bear their burden. I ask every friend to give his trifle. Let me just draw your attention to one most important fact: viz., every farthing goes directly to the blind, and not a penny is expended on agents or salaries.

The amount Collected was £16 5*s.*

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN'S SERMONS.

No. 1—A SONG ABOUT REDEMPTION.
No. 2—HARD WORK AND BAD PAY.
No. 3—HOW LONG?
No. 4—HE IS PRECIOUS.
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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

SWEET SLEEP.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 14TH, 1869, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth."—John II——xi. v.

SORROW had visited yonder cottage in the village of Bethany, for the beloved brother Lazarus had been striken down with sickness. His two sisters, Mary and Martha by name, loved him well, but they knew also that they were not the only ones by whom their brother was beloved, so they sent word straightway to Jesus saying, "Lord, behold, he whom *thou* lovest is sick." We should have supposed that directly such a messenge reached our Divine Master he would have hurried to Bethany, and with loving hand arrested the sickness in its course. But no—"his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts," for when he heard the tale of grief "he abode two days in the same place." What weary days those must have been to the weeping sisters. I can imagine I hear Mary saying, "I am sure he does love him," and Martha answering, "I know he does," and they looked the one on the other, whilst their hearts asked the question their lips refused to utter. "If he loves him, why does he so delay?" And now their brother grows worse rapidly, and it is evident to them the end is near. The last breath is drawn, the last sigh heaved, the eyes become glazed, and mournfully they say, "He is gone." The grave receives the much loved dust, and all hope is extinguished in the sisters' breasts. But where is Jesus? Has he forgotten his friend? Is he ignorant of all that has passed? No, he is only waiting to be gracious, for he is now saying to his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." On the road he is met first by one sister, and then by the other, the language of both being the same, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." This was their belief, but it was our Lord's purpose that his friend should taste of death, that no succour should be forthcoming before the end had been reached, for he had determined to glorify himself, not in the checking of a disease, which by the multitude might be attributed to merely human skill in medicine, but in the raising the dead to life, the prerogative of God alone.

It is our purpose this evening to dwell upon the words of our Lord to his disciples "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." We shall also take the liberty of leaving out the word "Lazarus," as it is true of all and every saint that dies, that he only sleeps.

As a church we have just suffered a great loss in the death of our beloved brother GEORGE STARLING. One of the holiest of our number

has been smitten down. One of the beloved of the Lord has been removed from earth to heaven. Our friend GEORGE STARLING sleepeth. But before we look at the text as specially applicable to him, let us by God's help meditate on a few of the sweet things suggested by its words. We have first—*a sweet relationship declared*, "Our friend." Secondly—*a solemn fact suggested*, Christ's friends die. Thirdly, *a cheering description given*, "Our friend sleepeth."

"I. We have then in this evening's text A SWEET RELATIONSHIP DECLARED.

"Our friend." Behold here wondrous condescension. Our Lord does not turn to his disciples and say "*Your* friend sleepeth," but places himself side by side with them in their affection and says "Our friend." I confess that when in my study I read this verse slowly over, I dwelt with greatest joy upon this word—lingered over it, and found the more I did so the sweeter it became. It seems to me to teach so sweetly the blessed fact that Jesus is one with his people. It is equal to saying "Do you love him? so do I. Do you reckon Lazarus among your friends? so do I too. I am one with you in your griefs, one with you in your joys, and one with you in your friendships also." Now as to many present here to-night who are believers in the Lord Jesus I would say, "Beloved, you occupy this position. You are the friends of Jesus, and he willingly owns you as such." Let us for a few minutes meditate upon the friendship Christ has to his children, and in doing so I would notice first, *it is a real one*. There is too much of superficial friendship abroad; plenty of the lip, but little of the heart. This is an age of shams; and among them most hideous of the lot, is that of miscalled friendship. I am afraid the friendships of the present day are more numerous and nominal but less real than those of some years back. But the friendship that exists between Christ and his disciples is not one only of words, words of love he speaks 'tis true, and sweet words they are, but their chiefest sweetness lies in the fact that every word of his lip has its deep echo in his heart. It is also a friendship that is heartily reciprocated by the saint. In the love of a saint to his Saviour there is a blessed reality. Whoever else he may not love with all his heart, his Saviour he must. Whatever else he may be in doubt about, he cannot doubt the fact that he loves Jesus. With Peter he cries, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

In this friendship *there are no secrets kept on either side.*

The old saying runs "whisperers separate chief friends," but in close friendship nothing is hidden, so whispers have nothing to reveal. When Jesus says to any one, "my friend," he declares a friendship that ignores all secret keeping, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." He tells out to them the secrets of his love, the secrets of his woes, the secrets of the glory he has laid up for them. The sweet work of sanctification is learning about Jesus, and it is the Spirit's mission to take of the things of Christ and reveal them to us. So it is with us who are his beloved, we cannot even if we would, and we would not if we could, hide anything from him. If there be a secret sin in the heart, if a fall in the life, O bear me witness, saints of God, that there is no peace for us until, like the woman of old, we have

"told him all." Heavy burdens roll off the soul, and sweet ease flows into it by telling Jesus everything. Are we bowed down by sorrow, or sore pressed by affliction, we can only find relief in the same way the early disciples did, "they went and told Jesus." And oh, how sweet it is in silent moments just to tell him that in the secret depths of our heart we love him. That is true communion when Christ tells his secrets to his disciples, and the disciples in return confide their all to him.

Jesus shows his friendship by *helping in time of need.*

You may think, my hearer, that you have many friends willing to help you; doubtless you have, as you are not now in need of any help, but wait until you require it, and you will find the only time to count how many friends you have is when you want them; and then generally it is no difficult matter to reckon them up because of their multitude.

Doubtless in the crowd here to-night there are some hearts which know the bitterness of finding out those whom they supposed would be most firm and true in the hour of trial become as nothing. "A friend in need is a friend indeed," and when Jesus says of any one "my friend," he shows his friendship by a thousand loving proofs. Never is Christ's friendship so sweetly shown as when we need it the most.

Moreover, if a person says to me, "my friend," I naturally expect he will show his friendship by calling in to see me; and sweet are the love visits that Jesus pays to his friends. How can they be described? Have you not thought at times, perhaps when depressed or in sickness, "surely such a one will call in upon me and help to wile away the tedium of the day." What a thrill of joy you experienced when the well known knock sounded, and the familiar voice and step were heard upon the stairs. But the sweetest knock I know of, is that of Him who says to his church, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me." Yes, Jesus calls on his friends; comes to them in their loneliness, and when no one else is near talks so sweetly that the time flies, and we are compelled to say, "it is good to be alone with no one else but thee." Like the disciples journeying to Emmaus, we forget the distance while he talks with us by the way, and makes our hearts to burn within us. That disciple knows but little of the sweets of the religion of Jesus who knows but seldom what it is to hear his Lord's knock, aud who but seldom sups with his beloved in closest fellowship.

Jesus is never ashamed of his friends. When once he has said, "my friend," he never retracts the sentence, There are many butterfly friends fluttering round us all. To be seen in the summer of prosperity, but conspicuous by their absence in the winter of adversity. When the sun shone on you, you could hardly count them for their number; but when matters changed with you, you could hardly count them at all. If once you went out everybody seemed to know you; but now if you walk along the street your old acquaintances all seem to be stricken with a sudden short-sightedness; you are brushed passed by the very ones who used to be the most foremost in greeting you. Most of them would be ashamed to be seen walking with you for half a mile; such, alas! are some of the paltry friendships of this world. But if Jesus says

'My friend," he will stand by me in the time of poverty as well as of wealth. He will stand by me when the world derides, and when all others forsake. He is "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

One more thought ere I close this first point, and that is *the friendship of Jesus lasts for ever.* The sweeter the friendship the more terrible the blow that severs it. But severed it must be at last. Where are many of our friendships on earth now? Who among us cannot look back and recall to memory well loved faces that have been hidden from our eyes for years, and shall remain so until the trump of the resurrection morning.

In the experience of some, the holiest tie on earth has been snapt. "Until death us do part" has become a reality, and the memory of a happy past is all that now remains of marriage love.

Parents have seen their rosebuds wither in the home, and bosom friends have been torn away by the ruthless hand of death. I have but little doubt that in to-night's congregation a thousand broken friendships are represented. But the friendship that exists between Jesus and his loved one never can be broken. Let but my soul hear him say "my friend." Let him but whisper in my ear that I am among the happy number he calls his friends, then let come what may, in sickness and pain he will stand by my side and only come nearer as my body grows weaker. In the last struggle, when I gasp for every breath, when earth with all its glitter recedes; when the clammy sweat stands in beaded drops upon my brow, even then shall my ear, although deaf to all other sounds, hear his sweet voice say, "my friend, my friend;" and when death has conquered, and only cold clay remains, then will those loving lips declare "*our friend sleepeth,*" for "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the righteous." Surely then we may say that in this evening's text we have a sweet relationship acknowledged "Our friend."

In the second place and more briefly we have—

II. A SOLEMN FACT SUGGESTED. Christ's friends die. *The friendship of Christ does not exempt from death.* This dead reaper spares none. Death asks not whether the shock of corn is ripe for glory, or is as yet green, and unprepared for the sickle. He asks not whether his victim is a child of God or one of the world's devotees. This mower holds not back his scythe because the one who comes before his sweep happens to be one of the chief supports of the church, or one of its brightest members. Death's arm is not paralysed because yonder one is a friend of Jesus. All are laid low alike—the friend and the foe of the Saviour; the lily of the valley and the thistle of the wilderness; the prepared and the unready. Sin must have its punishment. The seed will bring forth its black fruit; and though in the believer sin be pardoned, yet does it remain ingrained in his very nature. With but two exceptions, all the friends of Christ since the time of Abel downward have had to die, and

> "Ten thousand to their endless home
> This solemn moment fly;
> And we are to the margin come,
> And we expect to die."

Christ permits his friends to die *in order to make manifest how*

completely he has conquered death. Suppose that instead of tasting death all Christ's friends were like Enoch translated into glory; might not death boast and say "Aha, they dare not meet me in the field. Their Lord is afraid to put his conquest to the test. 'Tis easy for them to say 'O death, where is thy sting?' For they have never met me foot to foot in my own dark valley. 'Tis easy for them to assume the victory when they have been spared the fight." Now the Lord will not have death so triumph, and therefore declares, "My friends shall meet you, proud conquerer; in single combat shall they one by one make you bite the dust; before my very weakest child thy boasted terrors shall fail; a thousand songs of triumph shall be sung by quivering lips; thine absolute defeat shall be declared by every friend of mine that dies." Yes, friends of Jesus, unless your Lord come again and receive you to his arms, die you must, to be another witness to his conquest over the last enemy.

Another reason why the friends of Jesus die is that they may be brought into conformity with their Lord. It may seem strange to some of your ears; but I believe there are many here who would rather prefer to die than otherwise, in order that in everything they might be conformed to their Master. Doubtless, it will be an honour to be one of those upon the earth when Jesus comes, and be caught up to meet him in the air, and so be "for ever with the Lord;" but I take it to be a higher honour to die; to be conformed to Jesus in his death; to follow him to the grave. Certainly they will have precedence at the day of the Lord's second coming, for it is those who sleep in Jesus that shall rise first, and then afterwards those who are alive and remain shall be caught up.

That Christ's friends do die is certain, for "our fathers, where are they?" Abraham, "the friend of God," was gathered to his people, and his dust deposited in the cave of Macpelah. Isaac and Jacob, and Daniel, and all the prophets have sunk into the grave; and the beloved disciple, who leaned his head on the Saviour's bosom, had to die. Are there not hundreds here this evening who have but to look at the family record in the old Bible to see the names of Jesus' friends who have long since fallen asleep in their Saviour's arms. Christ's friends may moreover be called to die very painful deaths. How general is the fallacy that an easy death is the sign of grace. How common the expression, "I am sure he is happy now, for he died very quietly." No greater mistake can be made than to suppose the nature of the death is any indication of the state of the soul. Some of the most worldly die without any bands in their death; while on the other hand some of the most godly die the hardest deaths, accompanied with the most acute agony the human frame can bear. Christ's apostles were favoured with no easy deaths. Peter was crucified. James and Paul beheaded. And of the rest scarcely one escaped martyrdom. How about the noble army of martyrs? Think you not that Christ loved them even when wrapped in flames? What was it that sustained the poor wretch upon the wreck but the loving voice of Jesus whispering in his ear, "my friend." The case of our departed friend GEORGE STARLING is a striking proof of the fact that Christ's friends may die painful deaths. I have seen scores of deaths,

and stood by the death bed of many a child of God and friend of Jesus, but I do not think I ever saw a more painful journey through the valley. I cannot remember ever having seen a sterner fight with death right up to the very last moment; and yet when our Saviour looked down into that quiet ward in Guy's Hospital, and beheld our brother convulsed with pain, he said, "Our friend, GEORGE STARLING."

III. WE HAVE IN THIS TEXT A VERY CHEERING DESCRIPTION. "Our friend sleepeth." Not our friend is dead. How sweet is this description of death, and yet not more sweet than true. Those verses you sung just before the sermon were not only sweet poetry but precious truth.

"It is not death to die,
To leave this weary road,
And 'midst the brotherhood on high,
To be at home with God.

It is not death to close
The eye long dimm'd by tears,
And wake in glorious repose
To spend eternal years.

Jesus, thou prince of life!
Thy chosen cannot die;
Like Thee, they conquer in the strife,
To reign with Thee on high."

How pleasant is the idea of sleep. Let us try, and for a few minutes carry out the metaphor. To sleep there must be a place to rest. The weary tramp stretches himself upon the grass. The City Arab curls himself upon the step. The man of wealth reclines upon the downy bed. Where do Jesus' loved ones rest? Their bodies slumber in the tomb, but the emancipated soul is enfolded in his arms and on his breast.

In sleep there is a *rest from pain.* Have you not, when sitting by the sick bed, thanked God when sleep has closed the eyelids of the sufferer. The brow that was knitted with pain becomes smoothed; the hands clenched in agony relax; the groans are hushed. For a time pain is a forgotten thing. "Our friend sleepeth." There is rest from pain in death. When I received the telegram on Friday night, saying that our brother STARLING was gone (for he died only a few moments after I left him) I could only say "thank God, the poor fellow is now free from his agony. The sufferer rests from his suffering." In sleep there *is a rest from care.* You may have been worried and careworn all day long. A leaden weight has pressed upon your spirit and anxious foreboding has filled your heart. But now sleep takes you in its arms, the mental strain departs—care for awhile at least is banished. Jesus' friends forget their sorrows when they fall asleep in Him. Did you ever watch a child sob itself to sleep? I often have. The little one cries as if it would break its tiny heart, and the big tears roll down its little cheeks. By-and-by the sobs become less frequent, the last tear glistens in the eye, and now it sleeps. A smile plays round about the lips. The rainbow has succeeded the storm. God's children often cry themselves to sleep and awake in heaven without a tear, for their God has wiped them all away.

Sleeping implies waking. We only lay ourselves down to sleep with the view of waking refreshed, and it is the expectation of waking that distinguishes sleep from death. 'Jesus only permits his friends to sleep because he can insure their waking. He gives his beloved sleep, and he will arouse them when the morning of the resurrection day begins to dawn. The loved ones most of us have sleeping in their quiet tombs are watched by their heavenly Friend with a solicitude beyond a mother's over a first born; and when he whispers in their ears, "beloved, 'tis time for thee to arise," then shall the sleeping dust awake, beautiful, glorified, and with the dew of an eternal youth.

And now I want, as I said at the commencement of the sermon, to insert the words "GEORGE STARLING." Yes, *our* friend and I know there is not one present who knew our brother, but will claim the word, "Our friend GEORGE STARLING sleepeth."

Most of you knew him, and all who did so must have loved him. I shall not, this evening, pass a high flown eulogy upon him, there is no occasion for it, and I have but little sympathy with the practice, nor am I preaching what is generally termed a funeral sermon; but I feel that when God permits us to witness a remarkable triumph over the last enemy it is but right to give you the simple recital. Let me therefore, in a word or two, tell you a few facts about our sleeping friend. Our dear brother prayed for the last time in this place six weeks ago to-morrow. Many of you will remember the prayer. It happened that Monday evening that it was much laid upon my heart that there were some present more than usually depressed in spirit. On looking over those present to see who to call on to pray, my eye fell on our dear brother, and something said, "ask him." I did, and requested him especially to remember the disconsolate and sorrowful in his prayer. He told me in the hospital that he hardly knew how to pray that night, for only that day the physician had told him that there was no hope for him. That prayer will never be forgotten by many of us. There was a peculiar pathos about it, and no wonder, for the poor fellow was praying for himself. Just after this he went down to Chatham, his native place, being desirous of speaking for Christ to some of his old friends there, before he was no more. He told me on his death bed of the happy time he spent there; when too ill to stand he sat in a chair and addressed those who used to listen to his words before he came to London.

Shortly after his return from Chatham he entered Guy's hospital, and it was there he triumphed. When I went to see him he was in the most excruciating agony. I will not attempt to describe it; it would but harrow your feelings, and do no good. Suffice it to say it was the greatest pain the human frame could bear. I said to him, "Well, brother and how is it with you in your soul *now*?" He gasped out, "He is precious,—precious. O, he is precious, I cannot tell you how precious." A few moments afterwards he added, "Dear Pastor, I only have one trial, and that is that my dear wife is not so happy as I am." For a moment or two I tried to rally him, and said, "perhaps you may be raised up again;" when, with a look that carried conviction with it he said, "Never, the Lord has told me I am going home;' and then turning to me he said at intervals in the most simple

way, "Can you explain, Mr. BROWN, how it is that I am so willing to die, for you know that I have every reason why I should desire to remain on earth? I am only twenty-six. I have a loving wife and a dear little girl, and everything to make me happy, and yet my desire is to depart. I really wish to die. Surely it is because I want to be with Christ which is far better." The sister of the ward, as the superintendents of the nurses are called, said to me, "if ever there was a good man in the hospital he is one, and he is so grateful for everything. I am sure I never do any little act of kindness for him, but in spite of all his pain the smile comes upon his lip." I thanked God for that testimony. A few days after when sitting by his side, I talked to him of the joys of heaven that were awaiting him, being unable to speak, he made signs for the slate to be given him, and slowly wrote "I have the earnest of heaven within my heart already." The following day when there, I thought he was insensible, and said to his wife, "what kind of a night has he passed?" She answered "a terrible one, he has been delirious most of its hours, but even in his delirium his thoughts have wandered to the best of things, for he has recovered his voice and sung a hymn right through." Our brother started round and said, "Did I really sing a hymn last night, darling? Which one was it?" She replied—

"Jesus the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see,
And in thy presence rest." &c., &c.

I could not help asking to what tune he sang it. He, motioning to his wife not to speak, said "I think I know which one it must have been, for I am so fond of it. Was it not this?" And to my surprise he, summoning all his strength, commenced singing the sweet verse to the tune "Even." Looking to his wife, he said, "Was not that it?" And she answered, "Yes." At the close of this service we will sing this same hymn to the same tune. May the Lord help us to sing as sincerely as he did.

Just before he died he said to me, "You know, Pastor, it was always my desire to enter the minstry and be devoted to the Lord's work; but now I pray that I may be like Sampson, and by my death slay more than by my life." It is in the hope that our brother's prayer may be answered, that I have told these simple but touching facts.

After agony the most intense, accompanied with joy truly marvellous, the Lord gave the sufferer rest on Friday evening. "Our friend, GEORGE STARLING, sleepeth." The Lord grant that when the summons comes to us, Jesus may say, "my friend," and after death may it be truthfully recorded, "he only sleepeth." The Lord grant it for his name sake. Amen.

Scripture read, 1 Cor. 15th from 33rd verse.

Hymns sung from "Our own Hymn Book."—859—830—786.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

GROWING FAITH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 9TH, 1869, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly."—2 THESSALONIANS, 1—3.

SELFISHNESS is prone to mingle not only with our prayers, but with our praises also. Just as in prayer we are liable to ask from our Lord only those things which touch and concern ourselves more especially, and to overlook the necessities of others; so in our praises we are apt to sing only about those mercies which we have ourselves received, "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name," is most often our song at the dictation of gratitude, for mercies which have fallen at our own door. But the child of God in his higher moments of communion will cheerfully acknowledge the obligation to render praise for mercies bestowed on others. He will sing not only for what his Lord has made him, but also for what grace has accomplished in the hearts of his fellows. Now we venture to say that a more unselfish spirit than the apostle Paul's was never found on earth, an example of which is found in this morning's text. We here have him rejoicing exceedingly, and using the strongest language to express that joy, not because of any particular mercy received by himself, but because the Lord had been pleased to bless in their own souls the members of the church in Thessalonica.

Paul's joy in this respect can be easily understood. That infant church at Thessalonica had been planted by his instrumentality, and the large majority of its members had been won to Christ through his ministry. He could look upon those young converts and say, "I have begotten you again unto the Lord, ye are my joy and crown of rejoicing."

The sympathy and love that exist between the soul winner and the soul won, between the instrument of conversion and the one converted, are so close and dear that they can never be described by the lip, but only realised in the heart. The love of a father toward his children is not deeper than the love which a spiritual parent will ever feel toward those whom the Lord has given him, and a father's interest in his children's growth and prosperity is not greater than the longing solicitude felt on the part of him who has been the means of leading souls to Christ; on the part of the minister towards the seals of his ministry.

The spiritual growth of Paul's young converts in the church of Thessalonica was such that when he marked their course, joy overflowed his soul, and in the language of the text, he felt bound by an impulse which it was impossible to resist to give thanks to God on their behalf. Chiefest among the causes of his gratitude was this, that he perceived in them the grace of faith to be growing exceedingly.

There are four prominent truths taught in the text. May the Holy Spirit help us in our meditation upon them.

The first is this—THAT IT IS THE DIVINE WILL THAT FAITH SHOULD GROW. Secondly—THAT GROWTH OF FAITH IS GOD'S WORK—for Paul said, "We thank *God* that your faith groweth exceedingly. Thirdly—THAT GROWTH OF FAITH IS CAUSE FOR REJOICING. Fourthly—THAT FAITH SHOULD NOT ONLY GROW, BUT GROW EXCEEDINGLY.

1—IT IS THE DIVINE WILL THAT FAITH SHOULD GROW. Growth is one of the characteristics of God's work. From the moment when in the morning of creation he caused, obedient to his command, all things to spring into mature existence, from then down to the present time, successive stages of growth have marked his handiwork. Every tree in the garden of Eden was created bearing "seed after his kind, whose seed is in itself." And thus for ages have seeds been dropping in the earth, swelling, taking root, growing up, and gradually taking the place of the forests that fall before the woodsman "Time."

The oak that breasts the storm, and fights in savage fury with the gale—the oak, that lives in the hurricane, and strikes its rugged roots deep downward through the soil, until at last it grips the rock with the clutch of a Sampson, is after all only the outgrowth of the acorn, once carried in a child's pocket, and thrown with childish glee down the ravine.

The eagle, that looks with unblinking eye upon the sun—that steers his course in the teeth of the storm—that laughs at intervening

mountains, as with its broad wings it sails majestically over them, was once the tiny eaglet in the nest, who feared to spread the wing.

The God of Nature and the God of Grace are one. As in two paintings drawn by the same hand, although the faces depicted, may be almost in every feature dissimilar, yet you detect that the same pencil sketched both countenances, so when we look on the realms of Nature and of Grace, 'tis evident that the same God reigns in both.

Beloved, God's trees, the trees of his right hand planting, attain not their full proportion in a moment. It is true, in the kingdom of Grace, that old heads are not found on young shoulders. The aged silver haired veteran saint, matured, and ripened by years of long experience, is only the outgrowth of the once almost desparing sinner. Yonder child of God, so mighty in his faith, who Elijah like, seems almost able to open or shut heaven with his prayers, is simply the outgrowth of the trembling seeker, who cried "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

God's saints, who now mount upward as with eagle wing, could not always look unblinkingly at the sun. God's eagles cannot from the first moment ride upon the hurricane, nor sport themselves in the storm. They were once the tiny, trembling, little eaglets in the nest, whose downy feathers quivered with every summer zephyr. However much believer thou mayst have grown, and however high thy spiritual attainments may now be, yet forget not thine early weakness. It will lend to personal humility in thine own soul and teach thee tenderness towards others; and to those of you present who have not long known the Lord, those of you "who are our crown of rejoicing," we would say to you, be not too much cast down by failures. Think not because you have not yet attained the faith and joy of so-and-so that there has been no work of genuine grace in your heart. He who has commenced the work will carry it on by successive stages, for growth is our Lord's method of working; perhaps some will ask the question "Why?" To such a caviller we answer, it should be sufficient reason that it is his will, and in the language of St. Paul retort, "Nay, but, oh man, who art thou that repliest against God." But though ourselves perfectly satisfied with this answer, may we not venture to suggest that the growth of a believer is part of God's joy? There is a pleasure in watching growth. I appeal to those of you who are parents if it be not so. Is it not your greatest joy to mark the tender growth of the body, and the gradual developement of the mind, of the little light of the home? Shall he who implanted that joy lack it himself? Surely it is not too much to say our Heavenly Father takes an infinite interest, and

finds an infinite joy in the growth of His children. In Solomon's Song, that holy of holies, in scripture, we find Christ walking in His garden, to see how the myrrh, aloes, and spices grew, and to eat his pleasant fruits. Moreover, it is by this process of gradual growth that we best learn our Lord. Were we to attain maturity at once, we should lose many a sweet experience; we should have but little knowledge of his loving kindness, and know but little of his long suffering tenderness. It is better, therefore, for our own hearts and for his glory that sanctification should be marked by growth.

Let us now notice in the second place, that GROWTH IN FAITH IS GOD'S WORK. This we gather from the form of expression used in our text, "we are bound to thank *God*." Paul recognised the growth of faith in the Church at Thessalonica as God's doing. That it is so—I think we can show you in a single sentence; growth after all is but the development of life, and life is the breath of God. Man has never yet been able to place that secret thing into any of his works which will cause them to grow. The sculptor may chisel the marble block into a form of loveliness until it *almost* seems to breathe, but it has no inherent power of development, a century of time will find it, as his hand left it. The artist may fashion in wax, flowers that deceive the sight, but to impart that power which will cause the bud to open into a flower is beyond his skill. The prerogative to cause growth is God's alone, and that growth is as much his work as the first implanting of the principle of life. Is it not the deepest desire of every believer to grow in conformity to his Lord? And yet has he not learnt by painful experience, his own inability so to do? He knows that it is his God who must work within him, to will and to do of his good pleasure.

"Faith; 'tis a precious grace
Where'er it is bestowed,
It boasts of a celestial birth,
And is the gift of God.

Lord, 'tis thy work alone,
And that divinely free;
Send down the Spirit of thy Son
To work this faith in me"

And here let me give utterance to a thought, I pray you may be enabled to carry it to your homes and carry out in your future life. Sanctification comes by the same means as justification, with the same faith you first trusted Christ to save you, you must trust to him to make you holy, the language of your heart must be, "Lord Jesus I trust to thee to subdue my sins, I trust to thee to fashion me to thine image, I trust to thee to breathe thy spirit within me."

The tree grows not by violent efforts of its own, but simply by living in the sunshine, and God's children grow not by their own vows and resolves, but by dwelling in the light of his countenance, who is the "Sun of Righteousness." It is the Sun that mellows, both the fruit of nature and of grace. Do you ask, *how* he makes our faith to grow; I answer in three ways. First, *by placing in faith itself, a principle that compels its growth.* As in the infant so in faith there is that which naturally develops itself, a still born faith such as a devil may have can never grow, but a living faith, living because it's God-given, *must* grow. Perhaps some will object. "If that be true, how do you reconcile it with your previous statement that growth in faith is alone God's work." This is a very old objection. Every infidel has harped upon this string, and declared that everything is governed by eternal laws, but *who* made the laws, and *who* gave faith the principle to grow? This principle of growth in faith forbids faith remaining the same. But growth requires nourishment, and *by nourishment God increases faith.* The child grows by food, and the tree grows not unless it draws its nourishment from earth and air, and the author of our faith has provided that faith a continual banquet. I mean the promises. Am I addressing one this morning with weak and timid faith; then let it feast on such a promise as this. "My grace is sufficient for thee." Is there one here in distress about the future looking forward with apprehension to coming days, then let thy faith strengthen itself on this promise. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Right throughout the whole of his blessed Book the Lord has provided that on which our faith may and must grow stronger. Faith lives in the atmosphere of the promises.

Now a child will not grow by nourishment alone, it wants exercise. Growth in bulk is not always growth in strength. The very exertion that brings weariness and makes the little one long for rest, brings with it also strength. It is not the sitting at the dinner table, but the running out of doors in healthy exercise that makes the child grow.

The tree grows not alone through sunshine and soft summer breezes, but by the wintry gale. It is the storm that gives it stability, and it sucks its strength from the breast of the tempest. A week's campaign in the battle field will make a better soldier than a year of pipeclay and parade. *God makes his children's faith grow strong by exercise.* To Abraham's faith he gives a Mount Moriah—to Jacob's, the loss of a Benjamin. To Daniel's, a den of lions, and to a Job's, a succession of messengers of evil; and think not believer present that you will be an exception. Your faith will have to grow by being strained and tried. Your arm of faith like the blacksmith's will have

its muscles turned to whipcord by wielding many a hammer. Thus we have tried to show that faith grows by an inward principle, appropriate nourishment and daily exercise.

III. This verse teaches us that GROWTH IN FAITH IS A CAUSE FOR REJOICING. "We are bound to thank God, brethren, because your faith groweth exceedingly." Why do you think the Apostle Paul rejoiced in the growth of their faith? I think mainly for two reasons. First, *because he knew that in proportion as their faith grew, so also would their happiness.* Faith and happiness always walk hand in hand. Little faith is of just the same nature as great faith, and saves as certainly, but little faith is always crying and wiping its eyes, while great faith occupies the livelong day in singing. Little faith says, "I am sure I don't know after all whether I am his, I hope I am" And if it manages to get over this difficulty, it only tumbles into another, and says "I very much question whether I shall keep his." When it gets into the stream of trouble it begins to cry out "I feel no bottom, all thy waves and thy billows go over me." But strong faith is gloriously conscious of its interest in Christ, with cheerful voice it says, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day." When in mid stream its head is above water, and it sees dry land ahead, while it hears in anticipation the Saviour's welcome, "Come in ye blessed of the Lord." Both walk the same road, and will assuredly reach the same place, but their experiences in the journey are widely different. I need not dwell at any length on this point, for your heart tells you that when your faith is strongest your joy is greatest.

I think also Paul rejoiced because he knew *that in proportion as their faith increased so would their capacity for labour.* A great work is too much for the hands of weak faith, and a heavy burden would break its back. Weak faith walks in the rear, of the army only, strong faith in the van. We say not there is no work that weak faith can accomplish; it can give the cooling draught of water to the wounded on the field, and do a thousand little acts of kindness to its fellow soldiers, but it is only strong faith that can make one in the forlorn hope, and carry by assault the strongholds of hell, tearing down the black flag from the frowning battlement, and planting in its stead the blood-red banner of its captain.

Little faith can do a useful work in hoeing and raking and watering the plants of the garden, but only strong faith is qualified to go out as pioneer into the backwoods of sin, and with lusty blows make

the first clearing. The sword of the spirit is too heavy for weak faith to wield with much effect, but put that same sword into the hands of strong faith and see how it makes it swing with lightning speed, leaving gaps in the foeman's ranks at every stroke. Yes, friends, workers for God must have strong faith, or they will soon have their hearts broken, and be ready twenty times a day to throw down their weapons and cry "I give it up."

IV. FAITH SHOULD NOT ONLY GROW, BUT GROW EXCEEDINGLY. I do not think the Apostle Paul so much thanks God in this text for the growth of faith in the Church at Thessalonica, as for the fact that it grew exceedingly. It was not a small but a great increase of faith he saw in them. Alas! with what small increase are we satisfied; and if sometimes we do manage to trust our God a little more than usual, how prone we are to grow self-righteous about it. I fear the race of giants in faith has degenerated. There was once a generation of men who seemed as if they could trust their God for anything and everything. In their muster roll we find the names of Abraham, Daniel, David, Luther, Knox, and others. God's Church has lost its faith more than anything else. Would that it were revived. Zion wants a faith that walks unshackled by probabilities, and depends not on circumstances.

Buonaparte once said, "Other men are made by circumstances, I make circumstances." What he said boastfully faith can say truthfully. We want faith, that will make us do what the world will term outrageous things. Faith that will shock the nerves of prudent unbelief. Faith that will refuse "to take all things into consideration." Faith, that only takes into consideration that its God is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," and that all his promises are "Yea, and Amen in Christ Jesus." Be not content with a mere canoe faith, only meant for fine weather, and swamped through a capfull of wind; but pray for a leviathan faith that sports itself in the deep when lashed in wildest fury. Pant for an Elijah-like faith, with hand strong enough to turn the lock of heaven and bring the showers down.

And now, poor seeker, a word to you—it is, "let your faith grow."

You believe that Christ is *able* to save you, go a step further, and believe he is *willing*. You are saying this morning, "Lord, I *almost* think I can trust thee for my salvation," go further and say "Lord, I *do* trust thee." Take him as thine only hope, with the hand of faith lay hold of him, and resolve, "sink or swim, win or loose, from this

moment I trust thee." And then when you have heard his loving voice say to thee "Thy faith hath saved thee," then pray that that faith may daily grow. The Lord grant that it may be said concerning all his children in this tabernacle this morning "Your faith groweth exceedingly."

Lord, increase our faith, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

53, Bancroft Road, Mile End Road, N.E.
May, 1869.

Dear Reader,

If you are one of our hearers at Stepney Green Tabernacle, you know, without being told, the necessity that now exists for a larger Sanctuary, but if you are one of our Congregation whom we have never seen, and to whom we only speak through the medium of the published Sermons, we would, in a line or two, tell you our difficulty. It is a difficulty we thank God for, and one we pray may become general everywhere. The numbers desirous of hearing the Word are far more than we can by any means accommodate. Every Sunday evening some four hundred more than the place was built to hold, are crowded in, whilst large numbers are necessarily denied admittance. This has continued for over two years. The Lord has also been pleased to give what we deem a far more evident token of his blessing, viz.:—many additions to the Church from out of the world. In no spirit of self laudation but in deepest thankfulness we say that the number of saved ones during the two years may be reckoned by the hundred. Unto God alone be all the glory.

It is our desire, by the Lord's help, to erect a building capable of holding three thousand. The cost of this, exclusive of the ground, will be about £12,000. It is our fixed determination to have no spire or unnecessary ornament, believing that in these days of ritualism and superstition the simpler a place of worship is the better. Thus far we have been helped of God more than we ventured to expect, having received since the commencement of this year just upon £3,000 in promises and cash. Friends have been raised up for us in all parts of the country, and never has a day passed without some free-will offering being sent us.

Dear reader, will you make one to help? We venture to ask you the more boldly because we believe it is an honour to have a hand in any work of the Lord's.

If one of the congregation, still we ask you to respond to this appeal, if it only be *in the shape of a few stamps, such being of the greatest use;* and to every reader of these few lines we say "help us to your utmost."

Please make Post Office Orders payable at 148, Mile End Road.

Looking to the Lord to induce you to help, and that at once,

I remain,
Yours in Christian love,
ARCHIBALD G. BROWN.

Printed and Published by D. Francis, 137, Mile End Road.

Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

WILL HE COME TO THE FEAST?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 6TH, 1869, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?"—JOHN xi.—56

OUR Lord had just performed the wondrous miracle of raising his friend Lazarus from the tomb. Before an astonished group he had, with a word, called back the dead to life. At his command he who had been in the grave three days already, had come forth again to take his place in the loving family at Bethany. Such an act as this could not fail to be widely spoken about, and wield an immense influence in favour of Christ among the people. Being conscious of this, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered a council together to take into consideration what was to be done under the circumstances, and how best they might counteract the influence which was spreading on every hand. After much deliberation they decided that it was necessary he should by some means be put to death, and from that day they took measures to carry their determination into action. Jesus knowing their purpose, and knowing also that his hour was not yet come, "walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence into a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples." Whilst thus living in seclusion, the time for the Jews' passover came round. From all parts of the country the male population flocked towards Jerusalem to purify themselves before the feast. It must have been a busy scene; fresh arrivals entering the holy city every minute, and all the roads and lanes dotted with the various groups, all wending their way in the same direction.

But though varied in appearance, and coming from different parts, it was evident to any observer that there was one matter paramount in the minds of all, and constituting the main theme of conversation along the road and in the temple. Had you been there you would have heard one question asked on every hand. It was "do you think he will come?" The little knots of people gathered in the streets—the groups in the temple—the travellers on the road—all were anxiously debating the same subject. "Will he come to the feast? What do you think? And you?" Who was it whose company was so anxiously desired? Who was it, the probability of whose coming seemed to absorb every mind? It was Jesus. The design of the Sanhedrim against his life, and the fact of his retirement from public, was doubtless

known to most. But the passover was a special occasion, all males were obliged to be present; and the question was "would he come? Would he treat with contempt the designs of his enemies? Would he, to rejoice the hearts of those who loved him, dare all and join them?"

These were the thoughts agitating the hearts of many. The question was doubtless asked from a variety of motives. Curiosity prompted it in many; the fame of Jesus had reached the town or village where they lived; they had heard of his power to heal the sick and raise to life the dead, and the miracle performed on Lazarus had been the talk of the place for weeks; they wished to see what he was like who did such wondrous things. This they thought was their only opportunity, so anxiously they asked whether he had yet come; and when answered in the negative, asked whether they thought he would.

There were also some sullen, evil-eyed Pharisees, who gathered together in groups, argued the likelihood of his presence. Diabolical hatred and deep revenge gave them their anxiety; and as they laid their plans of blood, they often asked each other, "What think ye, that he will not come to the feast." But in all probability the vast majority of those who asked the question did so because they felt a true desire to see him, and hear the words of his mouth. To be in his company was their chief inducement in journeying to Jerusalem.

True, they had come up from the country in obedience to law and universal custom, but still their feet trod the road all the more willingly because of the hope of seeing him. He was the object of attraction.

"Will he come to the feast?" is ever the language of God's people in all their gatherings; and the motive that prompts the question is that of intense desire for his presence and company. Let us then this evening dwell upon the text not as the language of the Jew at the passover feast, but as the question of the saint in relation to every service. We will dwell first on THE QUESTION AND DIFFERENT REASONS FOR ASKING IT; secondly, we will GIVE OUR ANSWER AND THE REASONS FOR IT BEING SUCH AS IT IS; thirdly, MENTION SOME SIGNS INDICATIVE OF HIS BEING AT THE FEAST; and lastly, TRY AND POINT OUT SOME WAYS TO ENSURE HIS COMPANY.

I. First then—THE QUESTION. It was, "will *he* come?" *They saw many others going up to the feast, but that sight satisfied them not.* On the road were relatives, friends, fellow townsmen, and numbers whom they knew by having often seen on previous occasions. There was no lack of company, and no necessity for solitary travelling. Yet, despite the multitude surrounding them, the one question was, "will *he* come?" Believer in Jesus, is not such the case with you? You rejoice to see the multitudes flocking to houses of prayer, with David, you delight with them "to keep holyday," but yet you feel that were all the world present and your Lord absent, your soul would only be filled with disappointment. It is a happy thing to come to the feasts of the Lord, surrounded by family and friends, and if he be present, their company lends an extra charm. But how, if he be absent? Can they supply his place? Ah, "No." Amidst a thousand equally as alone, you ask, "will *he* come to the feast?" The goodness of a meeting can never be reckoned by its numbers. A

crowded house may be full without Christ, and the room with only the "two or three" may be full with him. Numbers merely will never satisfy a saint. *Nor will the respectability of those present.* The best families in the land were doubtless represented in Jerusalem as well as the poorest. Yet their presence in no way lessened the desire for Christ's. What a miserable mistake it is of the present day to suppose that the so-called respectability of a congregation constitutes in any way the prosperity of the Church, or the value of its services. The child of God will rejoice to see them brought under the sound of the gospel as he would any other sinners, but beyond that, their company gives him no pleasure; he can no more feast on respectability than on numbers. He wants Christ. He would sooner worship with the poorest and their Lord, than with the wealthiest without him. Christ's presence is to him simply indispensable, and no one else or any number of others can take his place.

Many of these Jews had *come on purpose* to see him. The journey had been undertaken with this expectation. Let them see never such glorious sights, yet if they see not him they must return to their homes disappointed men and women, the one design of their coming being unfulfilled. Say, child of God, has not the expectation of meeting your Lord been the sole motive power that has brought you here? Was not the language of your heart, as you walked to the sanctuary, the same as that of the seeking Greeks, "we would see Jesus?" Will not this sanctuary be nothing better to you than a sepulchre if you have to mourn an absent Christ? And surely, if there is one time more than another when we feel we *must* have the Lord's presence in order to be refreshed, it is when (in obedience to his command) we gather round the table to remember him in broken bread and outpoured wine, as so many of us hope to do this evening. Yes, we have come here on purpose to see Jesus, and nothing short of the sight of his blessed face will satisfy our souls; with what deep anxiety therefore is the question being asked by many a heart, "what think ye, that he will not come to the feast?"

There are many reasons prompting the question; but as we desire the service this evening to be brief, we can only dwell on one, and that is that we feel *it will not be a feast at all if he does not come.* No true child of God can feast on externals. Without Christ the feast is no better than a fast. Let there be everything else but Christ and he only starves, but never feeds. Here is a touch-stone whereby the true saint is discovered, and the formalist detected. The latter *is* satisfied with the temple—the people and the service. He never takes the trouble to seek Jesus or ask whether he be at the feast or no. So long as the service is conducted in what he terms "the proper way"—so long as the form is decorous or showy as his taste inclines—so long as the ritual is duly observed, he is perfectly satisfied. He is a formalist, and the form suffices him. Far different is it with the spiritual man; to him the form is of little value, and anything that serves to destroy the spirituality of the worship is looked upon by him with abhorrence. All his desire is to know whether Christ is present, and if so, whether he is communing with him, and all he dreads is lest anything should occupy the position that belongs to his Lord alone

Let me illustrate what I mean by an anecdote. A Spanish artist was once employed to paint a picture of the "Last Supper." It was his chief desire to throw all his powers into the form and countenance of the Saviour, so that he alone might attract the gaze of the beholder; but it so happened that he put on the table in the foreground such exceedingly chaste cups, the workmanship of which was so beautiful, that when his friends came to see the picture in his studio, they all said "What beautiful cups they are." "How chaste." "You have indeed been most successful in them." Nothing was said about the Saviour, but all about the cups. "Ah!" said he, when they had all gone, "I have made a great mistake, I see that these cups attract the eyes of the spectator away from the Master whom I wanted to be the object of admiration." So he took his brush and rubbed them from the canvass. So will the believer willingly dispense with anything however good it may be in itself, if it but for a moment divert his gaze from the person of his Saviour. The formalist stops at the chaste cups, the true christian at nothing short of his Lord. He will desire his Lord's presence moreover because it is his being at the feast *that gives him a spiritual appetite.* Not only must Christ give us the food but he must also give us the appetite to desire the food; and this is most necessary, for the very choicest of food is insipid to the taste if appetite be wanting. Have we not often found by bitter experience that it is possible not only to lack communion, but to be in such a dull, indifferent state of soul as not to pant and hunger for it. But let Christ be at the feast, and spiritual desire will be aroused, and the first step towards being fed is to hunger. In order, therefore, to have a feast and the hunger to enjoy it, there is a needs be for Christ to be present. To sum up all in a sentence—Christ's company is the feast, let that be wanting, and it is only bitter mockery to call the most elaborate service by the name. For this reason, with far deeper anxiety than the Jew's do we ask, "what think ye, that he will not come to the feast."

This question was also asked, because *they knew there were many reasons why he should stay away from the feast.* The high priests were up in arms against him. The Sanhedrim had determined his death. There was danger in his showing himself openly among the people. It was the remembrance of these things more than anything else which caused them to wonder whether he would come to the feast. And, beloved, do not we know of many things sufficient to make us doubt whether he can come into our company? *Has he lived in our warmest heart's affections?* Have we not to confess to a terrible amount of worldliness, coldness and indifference? Has there not been in all our hearts sufficient coldness to make us question whether he can again give us a love visit. *Have we not often been ashamed of him?* Blushed to speak his name? Refused to defend his cause when it has been assailed? Is it I ask any marvel that conscious as we all must be of having often denied him we tremblingly put the question, "Will he come to feast? *Have we not also been often absent from the feast when he has been present?* Are there not some here who, although they desire to sit at his table this evening, cannot but remember that through backsliding they have long been absent from the feast? With what

deep anxiety do you ask the question, "Lord, now that again I am coming to the feast, cans't thou condescend to meet me after I have so long been absent when thou hast been present?" And are there not more of us who feel that although we may have constantly given our bodily presence, yet our hearts been far away, occupied with a thousand other things than communion with our Lord, and our hearts this evening feel that were he to deny his company now that we do desire it, it would but be perfect justice. There is yet another cause sufficient to make us wonder whether he can come to the feast, and it is *the many vows we have made at former feasts and broken.* What resolves we have made when sitting at his table on former occasions. What lives we meant to lead. To what a height of spiritual-mindedness we determined to rise. What lives of thorough consecration we vowed to live. How we wept over past coldness and resolved that our future career should be a very contrast to the past. But alas, the resolves have passed away with the ordinance. The vows of a Sabbath evening have been forgotten on a Monday morning, and we have again sunk into our former life of cold indifference and worldliness, to be again roused the following month, and to again relapse into the half-hearted state in which perhaps some feel they are this evening. Oh, is it any wonder, friends, that on remembering all these things we marvel if he can again honour us with his company. There are sufficient causes known to all our hearts to make us say, "What think ye, will he not come to the feast?

II. Secondly.—I WILL TRY AND GIVE THE ANSWER, AND SOME REASONS FOR IT BEING WHAT IT IS.

Well, dear friends, in answer to the question "Will he come to the feast?" I reply, "Yes, I think he will." Nay, "I believe he will." Yea, more, "I know he will." My reasons for giving such an answer are fourfold. First—I think he will come to the feast *because he loves it himself.* Is it a joy to you to commune with him? It is an equal joy to him so to do. Do you love his company? He also loves yours. Is it your delight for him to draw near to you? It is also his delight to be near his people. Is your language "O that I might find him?" His is "Let me see thy countenance—let me hear thy voice." Christ finds his joy in walking in the garden and beholding his fruits. "He feedeth among the lilies." Jesus loves the feast as much and far more than you do. It is no irksome work to him to be in company with his people. Therefore, because it is his delight I think he will come to the feast.

I think moreover he will come *because he has instituted the feast and invited us to it.*

The sweet feast we hope to celebrate this evening is no man-appointed ordinance. It was his dying command, "this do in remembrance of me." He has ordained it; he has provided the feast at his own cost; it is he who invites us. Do you think then that when we come at his own invite, to meet with him and feast on his bounty he himself will be absent? Surely not. Would you invite a friend to sup with you and then permit him to find an empty house and bare table when he came at your own request? You never would. Nor will your Lord. His command thus to remember him is a sweet

guarantee that he will meet you at the feast. Banish from your mind all thought of man in the sacred ordinance, it will only give rise to doubting. The table is his not man's, the provisions are his not ours; the invite comes from him, from no lower source. Certainly then when we come at his own bidding we shall find him at the head of the table waiting to greet us.

Very likely also these Jews entertained the hope he would come from the fact *that he had often come before.* May not we do the same? Cannot we call to mind many times when he has favoured us with his company at the feast, when we have been no more deserving of it than we are now. Has he not often met with us in so sweet a manner that we could scarcely tell whether we were in the body or out of it? We had no claim on him then, and we have none this evening; we were all unworthy then—could not be more, so are we now. Then if we have found him at the feast on former occasions despite all our want of merit why not again? Ah, friends, it is a blessed thing that his visits of love rest not on our worthiness to receive them, but on his grace to bestow them, and for this reason I think he will come to the feast. My last reason for so thinking is *because of his promises.* He has said, "Lo, I am with you *alway.*" He has said, "I will manifest myself unto them," that is to his disciples. He has said, "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." With so many precious promises I venture to say to every timid doubting saint "I know he will come to the feast."

III. WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF HIS BEING AT THE FEAST?

Well, they are many. The first is *a melting heart on account of sin.* Our own unworthiness will appear great in proportion as we have communion with Christ. Self and Christ can never stand together, where he is, self lies in the dust. He who has but little nearness to Jesus may entertain flattering thoughts concerning himself, but when our Lord comes up to the feast the very light of his countenance reveals ourselves to ourselves, and the sight is such that with melting heart we have to exclaim, "Unclean, unclean." Think not, dear friend, because you are filled with anguish that you have lived so far from him, that therefore you can have no fellowship with him—that very sorrow of heart is a true though painful proof he is drawing you nearer. We are never so far off as when unconcerned about the distance, and often never so near as when we mourn our distance the most. If Jesus come up to the feast this evening, all our hearts will bow in penitential grief like weeping willows before the breeze. Self accusations will abound. Pride will be trampled under foot, and every soul be filled with what John Newton termed "pleasing grief."

Yes, there is a pleasure in the grief though not in its cause. It is this grief that prepares for joy, and the highest communion generally follows the deepest self-abasement. When King George the Third was crowned he partook, as is the usual custom, of the Lord's supper; but when, in order for his doing so the two archbishops came to hand him down from the throne, he stopped and said, he would never receive it with the crown upon his head. His crown then being removed, he requested the Queen to take off hers also. On being told that it was so secured

it could not well be removed, he said, "Well then, let it be understood that Her Majesty partook of it not as Queen but as a Christian."

So will it be received by all God's children. Not as ministers. Not as Sunday School Teachers—not as deacons but simply as Christians. The crown will be removed from every brow and cast at Jesus' feet. Deep humiliation will be one of the signs of Christ having come up to the feast. A second sign of his presence will be *a joyful heart on account of pardon.* When Christ visits his people, he not only makes them see the number of their sins, but also their complete pardon, and it is this double sight that prepares the soul for sweetest fellowship. This melting heart and joyful heart beat beneath the same breast at the same time. To quote John Newton again—

"With pleasing grief and mournful joy
My spirit now is filled;
That I should such a life destroy
Yet live by him I killed."

If Jesus meet you at the feast dear friend, you will get beyond the mere hope you are pardoned, and will be able to read your complete forgiveness in his wounds. You will hear him say "I have put away thy sin," and you will have the greatest joy any saint on earth can have, that of knowing the blood of Christ has cleansed you from *all* sin. The third sign of Jesus being at the feast *is an indifference and forgetfulness about all externals.* This point I have already touched upon, but much more might be said upon it. How few of us know what it is to be so absorbed in talking with Jesus as to be unconscious of the outside world. Would that we could have such an experience as that of Colonel Gardiner, who, when riding out with a friend one Monday after, having been at the communion service the previous day, made an apology for being so absent in manner, and said "that his heart had gone up so high whilst at the table that he could not yet get it down to the things of the world." Happy the man who gets his heart so high that it takes two days to come down to earth. Alas! with most of us it is no difficulty to descend. Yet if Jesus come to the feast, we shall know, at least in some degree, what it is to be forgetful of all things else but his sweet company.

IV. And now fourthly and lastly.—I WILL TRY AND POINT OUT SOME WAYS TO ENSURE HIS COMPANY.

The first and most apparent way is by *asking for it.* Christ will never say "nay" to the united request of his people, and we may rest most assured, that when that united request is simply for his presence it will be granted. Let us now, dear friends, invite him. Let there be from every heart a special invite given, "Lord, visit me." He has said, "Ask and ye shall receive." "Blessed Jesus, we DO ask. As a company of thy disciples we now look up to Thee, and invite Thee for thine own sweet mercy's sake to come to the feast this evening."

Poor wearied one, do you feel that Christ's company would refresh you and give you new life? Be not afraid, ask him and he will come. O, ask him every saint, for he will be found of those that seek him.

Another way is *by forgiveness.* Nothing so surely hinders Christ's communing with us as an unforgiving spirit; where that is, the joy of fellowship cannot be. A soul in an unforgiving frame is in just the

very frame that renders Christ meeting him at the feast impossible. Are you saying even now, "well I never can forgive so and so; or this or that supposed slight," well then, dear friend, do not expect Jesus will come up to the feast in your experience. That one fly will make the whole ointment lose its sweet savour to you. Whilst you withhold forgiveness I am certain your Lord will withhold his company. But why not forgive *now?* Why, in order to secure Christ's company, should there not be a general forgiveness on the part of all towards all? I am sure there are none of us but what need to be forgiven as well as to forgive. Let us all be able now to say with truth "forgive us our trespasses *as* we forgive them who trespass against us." A child of God never looks so thoroughly Christlike as when he pardons: as when he forgives as he has been forgiven. Can there be a sweeter time to forgive than when we meet to celebrate a dying Saviour's love? Surely not. It is the very time beyond all times when differences should be healed. Warburton and Tucker were bishop and dean at the same time of the same cathedral. An unhappy quarrel produced such a coldness between them that for some years they were not even on speaking terms. It was on one Good Friday not long before Warburton's death that they were at the Lord's table together. When he handed the cup to the dean, he stooped down, and said with deep emotion, "Dear Tucker, let this cup be the cup of reconciliation between us." I need not add it was. So let it be with all this evening. In that cup let every angry feeling be drowned. "Forgive, forgive, forgive," and Christ will come and meet you at the feast. Oh, to wait in loving quietness of spirit for him! Let him see us thus waiting for him, beloved, and he will fulfil our desire and "sup with us." And now, poor sinner, ere we close, a word to you. Jesus *is* here, closer to each one of us than we are to the other. He is by your side. He has come up now to the feast. What will *you* do? What will *you* say to him? Oh, invite him to your feast; tell him "you have nothing to offer him but a broken heart and contrite spirit," and he will not despise *that.* Trust him, sinner. Trust him now. Cast thyself at his feet while he is here and cry. "Blessing others, O bless me, even me." The Lord visit every longing heart, and meet every saint at the feast for his name's sake. Amen.

Scripture Read, John 13 c. to 25th v.

Hymns sung out of "Our own Hymn Book."—786, 774, 766.

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THE PIONEER OF DESTRUCTION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 20TH, 1869, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."—
PROVERBS xvi—18.

GOLDEN-MOUTHED Chrysostom has aptly called pride "the mother of Hell," for Hell with all its horrors is its hideous offspring. Had there been no perfidious pride there would have been no bottomless pit. Perdition was prepared for the Devil and his angels, and pride prepared the Devil and his angels for perdition. We need fear no language we can possibly use being too strong to denounce pride, for as Aristotle saith, "As Justice comprehends all virtue in it; so pride comprehends all vice." Is drunkenness to be condemned with unmeasured severity? Then let pride be equally so, for it is nothing less than a spiritual drunkenness. It flies as wine to the brain, and produces the same result. No wretched drunkard reeling along the road is a more pitiable or disgusting sight than the man who is intoxicated into idiotcy with the alcohol of his own accursed pride.

May language the most unsparing be employed in the denunciation of the sin of idolatry? Then let it be equally strong in the condemnation of pride, for they are one. The proud man is simply one who bends the knee and worships a more hateful idol than can ever be found in the whole catalogue of heathendom, and its name is "Self!"

God loathes pride, for "every one that is proud is an abomination to the Lord." To an angel's eye, it must be the ugliest thing on earth; and the saint, often deploring it, hates it with a perfect hatred. But although universally condemned, it is too generally harboured, and it is easy work to find a thousand excuses for the particular species of pride we possess, which is almost always, according to our own estimate, "only *proper* pride." Although the chief occupation of the minister should be the telling forth of the simple gospel message to perishing souls, and so preaching as ever to be able to say with Paul, "We preach Christ," yet it is also his imperative duty to cry out against particular sins, and lay the axe at the root of special iniquities. I want this evening, by God's help, to fetch a blow at the upas tree of pride. I have no doubt many things I may say will be considered too severe. I cannot help it if they are. The language of my text is strong and unvarnished enough; the truth it contains is put in the

most uncomplimentary mode, and I should be a traitor were I to attempt to smooth it down. My work is to declare that "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." I shall first of all—TRY AND ILLUSTRATE THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE TEXT BY SCRIPTURE EXAMPLES, and then next—APPLY THE TEXT TO VARIOUS CASES. First then, let me

1. *Try and illustrate the text by Scripture examples.*

I purpose having eight terrible witnesses to the fact that "pride goeth before destruction. Eight panoramic views proving that "an haughty spirit" precedes "a fall." The Lord grant that every illustration may be as a hammer driving the nail home until at last the truth is clinched in our hearts; never to be withdrawn.

The first witnesses I shall call from Hell, in the persons of ***Satan and his compeers.*** There can be but little question that the sin which hurled Satan as lightning from Heaven was pride. It was it that drew a third part of the stars of Heaven from the glittering firmament and quenched their light for ever in the blackness of despair. 'Twas pride that emptied a myriad thrones and made Hell groan with so stupendous a load of damned spirits.

The conception of England's greatest poet is not only grand, but one that bears the stamp of probability, that the cause of Satan's revolt and overthrow was his proud refusal to bend the knee to Christ. The mandate had gone forth from the everlasting Father's lips:

> "Hear, all ye angels, progeny of light,
> Thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers,
> Hear my decree, which unrevoked shall stand.
> This day have I begot whom I declare
> My only Son, and on this holy hill,
> Him have appointed whom ye now behold
> At my right hand: your head I him appoint:
> And by myself have sworn, to him shall bow
> All knees in Heaven, and shall confess him Lord."

To do this Satan refused and raised an impious war in Heaven. Then forth to the conquest came the Son; his countenance too severe to be beheld. On his fierce chariot roll'd, as with the sound of ten thousand floods. Right on his foes he onward drove; in his right hand grasping a thousand thunderbolts

> "O'er shields and helms, and helmed heads he rode"

and swept them thunderstruck before him to the gaping jaws of Hell. Down, down they fell through liquid seas of fire whilst

> "Eternal wrath burnt after them to the bottomless pit."

Thus in Milton's language concerning Satan's ruin,

> "Him the Almighty Power
> Hurl'd headlong flaming from the ethereal sky
> With hideous ruin and combustion, down
> To bottomless perdition; there to dwell
> In adamantine chains and penal fire,
> Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms."

Inscribed over the portals of Hell. Written in letters of livid flame, Engraven on the fetters of eternal brass, I read, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

The next illustration of the text I find in the *fall of our first parents.* The same accursed thing that introduced war, defeat and ruin into Heaven, brought into God's fair earth sorrow, sickness, death. The same hateful motives influenced Eve, as Satan. Too proud to submit to a prohibition that was love, the hand took and the mouth tasted the forbidden fruit. Oh, how can this lip describe the dire result, how tell the fall that followed? Methinks nature must have sighed. The clouds wept, the storm muttered, and Satan laughed! Eden's beauty was blasted—Innocence fled. Death stalked through the garden glades—Mankind was ruined. From that first act of sin what an awful harvest of sorrow has been reaped. The misery of ages may be traced to that revolt. Had there been no pride, there would have been no wars, no wrecks, no famines, no orphans, no widows. But, through a haughty spirit, all have fallen. Man, made in his Maker's likeness, the crown of creation work, has lost his beauty, and now far more resembles Hell than Heaven. Man, that was made for happiness, is now born for sorrow "as the sparks fly upward." The world, that was made an Eden, now bringeth forth the briar and the thorn, whilst "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." In every storm that rends the air—in every tear that rolls the cheek—in every groan that escapes the breast—in every churchyard that holds its dead—and in the great mass of sorrow that lies with crushing weight upon humanity—I see sad testimonies to the truthfulness of the text, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

The third witness I select to prove pride to be the pioneer of destruction is *Pharoah.* For many a long and weary year the people of Israel had been crushed into the dust by the iron heel of despotism. Their servitude had grown beyond endurance. The taskmaster and his whip had driven them to despair. One long piercing cry ascended from their hearts to Heaven. Mercy heard that cry and determined deliverance. Moses and Aaron, two messengers of the Lord, enter into the presence of the imperial despot and deliver the edict given them; "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go." Happy had it been for Pharaoh if, swallowing his pride, he had obeyed the behest and let the people go. He with scornful haughtiness replied "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go. I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Thus spake pride, and truly it went "before destruction." Ten devastating plagues like successive thunderclaps rolled through the land. The river ran blood—streams and pools all were blood. It was blood, blood on every hand. The land was red with it, but still pride held out. The dust was turned to lice. The flies swarmed everywhere. Boils broke out on man and beast. The hail swept in pitiless storms—the lightning ran along the ground. The locusts marched as an army through the land, leaving famine in their rear. Darkness grim and awful enveloped all. Yet still pride remained unhumbled. And now at midnight one doleful

shriek rings throughout Egypt, for in every house the first-born lies a corpse. Before so awful a destruction pride staggered, and Israel was commanded to go. And now comes the closing scene to this tragedy of a haughty spirit. I see the fugitive host as it presses onward with trembling haste to the shores of the Red Sea. It has now reached them; the mountains are on either side; the sea glitters in front and behind—ah!! what is it they hear? The shouts of men, the neighing horses, and the rumbling of chariots. What means it? It means this—that pride is bent on full destruction. No sooner had Israel escaped than the old pride which had already cursed a country returned, "What have I done, to let Israel go? it asked. How shall I bear the laughter of surrounding nations." "To arms, to arms," it cried. "Draw out the chariots—harness the steeds." "Equip the chivalry of Egypt for war." "After them quick." "Bring them back in chains." "Retrieve the honor we have lost." "Let it never be said they thus escaped a Pharaoh," and, "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." Now, in obedience to pride, the mad host follows after. It sees the fugitives in front—it laughs in savage glee. "They are ours, they are ours," it cries, "the Red Sea shuts them in." But the cloudy pillar came between the two camps as an impassable barrier, so they came not near the other all the night." And now the waters of the Red Sea divide and pile themselves in glassy walls on either side while Israel passes through. The cloud lifting shows the proud despot the fugitives gathering fast upon the opposite shore. Drunken with pride he rushes with his host between the watery walls. With shouts they urge the war-horse on: but all in vain. The Lord took off their chariot wheels, for in mid ocean they had to learn his power. Who can describe the horror of that moment when the watery walls loosed by the hand of God leapt into each other's embrace? Now, Pharaoh, ask "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" But no, the waves for a moment roll in glee, and when all again is calm, not a vestige of pride's army is to be seen save here and there some lifeless forms that are sullenly washed ashore. Surely the rushing waters and the drowning shrieks of Pharaoh's host form an awful commentary on the text, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Our fourth illustration is that of *Korah and his company.* Pride had taken possession of these sons of Levi, and shown itself in seeking the priesthood. They gathered together "against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" Dumbfounded by such a charge, Moses falls back upon the Lord to vindicate him, and replies to them, "Even to-morrow the Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him." The morrow's light has come, and destruction walks closely upon the heels of Korah's pride. All Israel stands about the presumptuous company who, with their censors in their hands, are at the dictation of their own mad pride about to assume the priesthood.

The warning voice of Moses is heard in ringing tones, crying. "Get you back! Back! back from the tents of these men, lest ye be consumed in all their sins." Horror-stricken, the crowd shrinks from them until Korah and his company are left alone the object of the gaze of the whole people, Again the voice of Moses is heard, "If these men die the common death of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me." There was a moment's pause of deathless silence—a trembling of the ground —and the earth yawned, and in the horrible abyss fell tents and men! Down alive they went into the pit, and the earth again closed her mouth and they were seen no more for ever! Those falling tents—those looks of unutterable horror and despair—those smothered cries—must surely have proclaimed to the ears of Israel as they do to us this evening, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

5. The next scene is a warrior-host like the sands of the sea for multitude, and flushed with presumptuous joy and confidence through many a victory in the past. Its proud monarch and commander is named *Sennacherib*. With boastful spirit he sends a taunting letter to trembling Hezekiah, king of Judah. The epistle ran, "Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly, and shalt *thou* be delivered." Thus blasphemously wrote the conqueror, drunken with his pride. At his wits-end Hezekiah "went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord." The answer quickly came, "I will put my hook in his nose and my bridle in his lips, and will turn him back by the way which he came." Do you see the proud host? Their myriad tents spreading on every hand, and banners gently waving in the evening air. Listen to their proud scoffs as they jest about the God of Israel, and think him to be such an one as the gods of Hamath and Arphad. Their pride is as great as their host. "But stay, thou haughty king of Assyria; boast not thyself before the battle's fought; thou has yet to learn that "pride goeth before destruction." That night in proud security slept the Assyrian host: they slept, but never woke.

> "For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
> And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
> And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
> And their hearts but once heav'd, and for ever grew still!
>
> And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
> With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;
> And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
> The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown."

Thus with one sweeping stroke of omnipotence did Jehovah make the haughty Assyrian bite the dust. Those silent tents—those death-glazed eyes—those rigid forms—that army of the silent dead—all preach one awful sermon from the same text we have heard before, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

6. A proud monarch takes his stand upon the roof of his palace, and as he looks down upon the streets and buildings of the huge capital, pride swells within the breast, and he boastingly exclaims, "Is

not this great Babylon that I have built?" While the word was on the lip there fell a voice from heaven, saying, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee." The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon the haughty spirit. Reason reeled, and affrighted left her throne. The imperious monarch was driven from among men, and did eat grass like the oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven; his hair grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails became like birds' claws. At the appointed time, God had mercy on the raving madman, and reason returned. Then did the once haughty despot lift up his eyes to heaven, and exclaim, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, know that those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

7. Yet one other illustration of the text found in the Old Testament. The scene is a banqueting hall. Around the table are many guests, presided over by a merry, thoughtless, haughty king. The goblets freely drained by the blasphemous crew were once used in the solemn worship of Jehovah. Drunken mirth is at its height, and pride has reached the climax, when a sight appears that sobers every reveller. A mysterious hand—and nothing but a hand—is seen writing a more mysterious message upon the wall, right over the head of the amazed monarch. When all the wise men and astrologers have done their best, but failed to interpret the warning, Daniel, the servant of the Most High God, declares, "Because thou, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, but hast lifted thyself up against the Lord of Heaven, therefore was this writing written, "Mene, mene, Tekel, Upharsin." In that same night was Belshazzar slain. Inscribed upon that wall by that bodyless hand was the truth, if not the words of our text, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

8. I have already dwelt upon this first division far longer than I intended, so in a very few words let me call upon the New Testament to produce its witness. A kingly orator clothed in purple addresses a deputation from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. His eloquence warms them, besides which, their cringing nature prompts applause. With one impulse they shouted, "'Tis the voice of a god and not of a man." Herod smiled approvingly. His pride was stroked the right way down. No indignant repudiation of the flattery fell from his lip. For a moment he stood in the full enjoyment of gratified pride. It was but for a moment—with a cry of horror the group of flatterers saw him fall—they rush to his help—'tis all too late, for smitten of the angel of the Lord, he lays one mass of corruption, eaten up of worms. That rotting corpse unites its testimony with the seven witnesses we have already heard, that pride is the pioneer of destruction. God grant that you may be led by the mouth of so many witnesses to believe the warning.

II. Having I trust proved by scripture illustration the veracity of the statement, there is now nothing left me to do but to APPLY ITS TRUTH. This I will try and do—first to *the individual*. Is there one here who, in the common expression of the day "has been making headway in life." Then to him I speak. It is not long ago, friend, since in your own language you were "nothing." You could always tell how much you were worth without the trouble of reckoning; in

fact you could not have counted it had you tried, for it was *nil*. Your wealth was always, in an uncomfortable sense, *un*told. But now things have changed with you. Business speculations have turned out successfully, and you begin to be the envied rather than the pitied personage. You are admitted into circles which heretofore were closed against you, and you are now learning the truth of the proverb, "nothing succeeds like success." Ask the Lord, dear friend, to give you grace to keep humble, for it is as difficult to carry a full cup without pride as it is an empty one devoid of murmuring. Shun all pride as you would have prosperity continued, for he who knows not how to carry the cup aright will soon have no cup at all to carry. Pride has ruined more than panics, and "an haughty spirit" is a short cut to the workhouse. If this text applies with any power to temporal concerns it does so with far more to spiritual. Am I speaking to one who considers himself invulnerable to the attacks of Satan, then to him I would give the warning "let him that *thinketh* he standeth take heed lest he fall."

We are never so near a fall as when we consider such an event impossible. The path of the spiritually proud is full of pitfalls; yea, the very pride itself *is* the commencement of the fall. I tremble for the man who has never trembled for himself; he walks on the edge of an unseen precipice, and requires but the breath of a temptation to send him headlong over.

"He falls deepest who falls highest," and "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Terribly true also is this text, in relation to work for the Lord. Many a minister has had his usefulness blasted through it. Many a work, fair and good in its commencement, has been stayed and withered by its blighting influence. Pride, as well as unbelief, hinders Christ from doing any great thing through its possessor. The stream of divine blessing only flows in any copious measure through the channel of an humble spirit. "Too proud to be used in the Lord's service," might be written upon the brow of many. God save all those of us who are in any way workers in his vineyard from so horrible a verdict.

It is indeed a solemn thought that there are this evening thousands of living testimonies to the fact that, whether in business, spiritual life, or the Lord's work, "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

2. The text is as true of *churches* as individuals, and certainly most true of that church which styles itself "the established." It is not the efforts of the Liberation Society; nor acts of parliament that will be its overthrow, but its own internal pride. A church that boasts its "*Arch*-bishops," "*Lord*-bishops," "*Right*-reverends," "*Very*-reverends," and I know not what other unscriptural titles besides is a doomed one, apart from any outward opposition brought to bear upon it. But let us not think that as dissenters we are free from all danger. Pride can lurk in the chapel as much as the church, and be found in her ministers as well as in Anglican *priests*. "Dying of dignity" is the unhappy condition of many a dissenting community.

If there be one thing I dread more than another it is lest through the abundance of blessing bestowed upon us, church pride should creep in. O pray it out and keep it out as ye would see the work continued in our midst, for let the hideous monster but rear its head then "Farewell blessing," whilst "Ichabod" will be engraven on every wall.

3. Thirdly and lastly, I would apply the text to the sinner. Dear friend, your pride precedes a destruction too terrific for me to paint in language. Your haughty spirit goes before a fall so deep it reaches Hell. Do you say, "What pride?" The pride that keeps you from confessing yourself a *lost* sinner. The pride that refuses to stoop to God's plan of salvation. The pride that makes you gather the filthy rags of your own supposed righteousness around you whilst you despise the spotless robe that a Saviour offers. The pride that makes you want to *pay* for salvation instead of receiving it as a free gift. Here is pride enough to sink a soul.

Do you still stand aloof from simple trust, as a guilty sinner in the atonement of Jesus, thinking that though such a way of salvation may suit a Mary Magdalene or a dying thief, it is far beneath your acceptance? Then your pride will be your destruction, for there is no other way whereby you can be saved. What! Too proud to come to Christ? Too proud to be saved? Alas! you will not be too proud to be damned; for as God's ambassador I declare, that though pride can never enter Heaven it *does* Hell. Down with thy pride, sinner, or it will down with thee. Go now and tell the Lord, thy pride is broken, thy haughty spirit quenched, and that as the very chiefest of sinners thou art willing to be saved by sovereign mercy through Christ. Lose not thy soul to save thy pride, but lose thy pride to save thy soul. The Lord bless to-night's warning to all. May its notes ring in our ears for many a day to come. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Scripture Read, Proverbs xvi.

Hymns sung out of "Our own Hymn Book."—100, Part I, 182, 554.

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He that winneth souls *is* wise.—PROVERBS xi. 30.

THE book of Proverbs may well be compared to a basket of pearls; to a collection of glittering gems cast together in richest profusion, without any connecting links between them. Search in any part of this silver casket, and you are sure to be repaid by the finding of some pearl of great price, some jewel which flashes with the light of heaven's inspiration. The other books of scripture may more properly be compared to necklaces of pearl or priceless jewellery, in which verse is linked to verse with bands of gold, and compose not so much a rare collection of various precious stones as one brilliant whole, the beauty of every gem being enhanced by its relative position to the rest. The beauty and preciousness of many verses lie more in their union with those that precede them, and in their bearing on those that follow them, than in their own isolated interpretation. The whole chapter, and often the whole of the epistle, requires to be perused in order to dive into the depths, rise to the heights, or view the true splendour of any one particular verse. Not so is it with the book out of which we have selected our text, every verse in it contains some truth (and often truths) of intrinsic value, that needs no other light than that it gives itself. The verse in itself is complete; the truth contained within it of independent worth. Without any commentary therefore on the surroundings of the text, we will take it as it were out of the casket, and meditate upon its own beauty. No one verse in the whole of this book is better known, better loved, more often quoted, and less often acted upon. It forms a matter for almost every prayer for minister or teacher, but too little is it reduced to daily practice by the generality of christians. Yet to every child of God present, it must present a theme of deepest interest; for who, if he has never won a soul, does not want to? Who has relatives or dearly loved friends yet without Christ, that does not desire the wisdom spoken of in the text, in order that they may win them for the Saviour? To those who have been the means of winning any, and to those who pant to win some, the subject must be all overflowing with interest and importance.

I shall divide the subject very simply, and as follows:—*Wisdom is seen in the attempt to win; wisdom is required in the work of winning;* and conclude by *giving some hints on the best way to win.*

1. First then—WISDOM IS SEEN IN THE ATTEMPT. He who

endeavours to win souls to Christ is a wise man. The very effort itself is a proof of true wisdom.

1. *The soul's position proves it.* There is a man yonder in the water. The stream is bearing him away with impetuous haste. He has sunk twice already, and is about, with out-stretched hands, to go down for the last time. There are two men on the bank angrily discussing the question as to how he got into the water. One thinks he fell in, and the other that he was thrown in. His certain death is forgotten in heat of argument. I see a country-man, who from his aspect never could enter into an argument except to be beaten, rush breast deep into the flood, fling the drowning wretch a rope and drag him high and dry on to the shore. Now I ask you "who was the wise man?" The one who wondered, or the one who acted; the one who speculated how the man got into the water, or the man who drew him out of it? Why the latter of course. Or to change the illustration. In a street near to us there is a house wrapt in flames, and in the front room up stairs I can discern the figure of a man. A group of wiseacres are busily employed in trying to discover whether the fire broke out in the basement or first floor, in the front or back of the house, when their learned disquisitions are disturbed by the hoarse shout of the fireman, "clear the way, clear the way." He turns some of them over as in his haste he struggles through them, throws the ladder up and mounts it. I see the red glare reflected on his helmet which seems to glow in the blaze; the sparks fall round him like a shower of fire drops; he heeds them not; with mailed hand he dashes in the window, and is lost to view as he leaps into the smoke-vomiting room. A moment's pause, and a ringing cheer breaks forth from the assembled crowd, for here he comes with the half suffocated man in his herculean grip. A hundred hands are stretched out to grasp his, while a thousand lips shout, "well done, brave action." Who was the wise man? The rough but heroic member of the fire brigade, or the moon-struck wondering dotards we have noticed? It is an impertinence to common sense to ask. And yet, friends, how many there are who are playing an equally fool's part in the matter of souls. Men who are always trying to find out the origin of sin, to solve the problem of why God permitted it in his universe, and to answer the negro's question of "why didn't God kill the Devil?" Far wiser is he who argues "I do not know the why and the wherefore of sin's existence; but this I do know that it does exist, and that souls are being damned daily through it, and therefore I will try by all means to save some. I know not where the first spark came from, but this I do know that human nature is in a blaze, and if it be possible by God's help I will pluck some firebrand from the burning." All honour to the men who, taking the world as they find it, stop not in their course, waste not precious moments in unavailing speculation, but with all their might strive to save some out of the general wreck. But a little while back a fearful storm raged on the north-east coast; the cliffs were crowded with thousands of pale-faced anxious relatives. One question was on every lip, but the answer to it on none. The question was, "do you think they will ever get back?" Who get back? Why the fleet of cobles, as they call the fishing boats in the north, which were all out plying

their trade, and had been caught in an unexpected hurricane. It was a sickening sight to see the anxious faces of wives, sisters, and friends. At last one brave heart could stand it no longer, and shouted out in tones that could be heard above the roaring of the wind. "Are there twelve of God's children here that don't mind going to the bottom in the effort to save some?" Be it spoken to their honour, a dozen came forward as volunteers in the desperate enterprise. Together they kneeled down upon the deck of a tug steamer and commended themselves to God; and then telling their friends that if they saw them no more, they might know they were in glory, they steamed out of the harbour. Through blinding spray, over mountain waves, through broken water they fought their way, watched with breathless interest by the mourning crowd. For six long hours they battled with the storm; at last they were seen returning and flying before the furious gale like an arrow from the bow. Straight they made for the harbour mouth. But why that joyous shout? Why? Because, towing behind them were six vessels they had saved, with their crews rescued from the jaws of death.

Does your heart beat quicker, christian, and does your pulse bound at the recital of such noble and godly daring? I tell you there is a far fiercer storm just without your dwelling than ever raged upon the north-east coast; not ships but souls are being wrecked, not merely going to the bottom of the ocean, but to the bottom of hell. Oh! stand not in amazement and wonder how it is so fierce a storm is thus allowed to blow, but "man" the gospel life boat, and, commending yourself to God, face the wild waste of furious water, and see if thou cans't not rescue some perishing soul, and draw it into the haven of perfect calm. The soul's position, which is a perishing one, declares that "he who winneth souls is wise."

2. *Soul winning is a noble work.* What is winning gold in untold amounts, or fame in almost boundless degree, to winning a soul? Suppose it were possible for you to acquire the whole wealth of the universe, and have it in one glittering pile at your feet, yet the Sabbath-school teacher who has been the means of winning one child's heart to Jesus has won, at a single stroke, more than you have, with all your wealth, amassed by years of slavish toil.

Is it counted an honour to be an ambassador for any country in a foreign clime, and above all to be the means of making peace between two hostile nations? To cause the din of war to cease, and "garments rolled in blood" to become things of the past? To cause the happy song of peace to be heard in place of the shouts of battle and groans of the dying? Greater honour far is it to be ambassador for Christ—to beseech men in his stead to be reconciled to God. Oh! the honour of being a herald of peace to any anxious soul; of being the means of bringing a heart at war with God to ground its arms; of running up the white flag of peace in any breast!! *A soul winner need envy no one;* his work surpasses all in true nobility; the greatest honour God can put on man has been placed on him.

Soul winning is a lasting work, and therefore he who attempts it is wise. Where will you find a work of earth that is really lasting? "I paint for eternity," said an artist. But is the artist's work a

lasting one? Let him with the skill of a genius and the colours of a rainbow, make the dull canvas instinct with life and a "thing of beauty," but it shall be no "joy for ever." Time shall rob the colours of their brightness, and centuries hence men shall wonder what they once pourtrayed, while the very canvas shall hang in rags from a mouldering frame. The sculptor laughs at the painter and says, "Away with the thought of thy painting for eternity, mine is the work that shall outlive time," and with the chisel he models the rough marble into a very Venus for beauty, or Hercules for strength. Proudly he gazes upon his master-piece, and indulges the flattering thought that *there* is something which will defy the influence of ages. But look at the now crumbling stone, trace the once clearly cut features if you can. Scornfully the builder views the effort of the previous two, and vaunts "mine is the work that lasts." Is it? Where is Nineveh? Where Babylon, with her hanging gardens? Where most of the grand cities that used to rule the world? Let broken walls, and heaps of rubbish the accumulation of long years, give the answer, and also give the lie to the proud boast. But suppose it was possible for man to paint or carve or build that, which, if the world should last another million years, should still endure, it must yet go when the world does. In the general wreck and conflagration all will be destroyed. No eternal work can be performed on a passing world which every moment draws nearer to its end. But he who wins a soul is the means of doing a work which shall last as long as God shall live. Teacher, in our Sabbath school last Lord's-day, you were the instrument of leading a soul to Christ, of winning a heart for Jesus. When the trump of the archangel shall declare that time shall be no more, the effect of that work shall still remain. It shall survive the "wreck of matter and the crash of worlds." It shall endure the pomp of the Judgment day, and long after suns and stars have been quenched for ever it shall shine with yourself as a sun in the firmament. Eternity itself can never diminish, only increase the grandeur of the work. He must be the wise man who engages in the only work that lasts for ever.

4. *It is a soul profiting work.* In the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth verses of this chapter you read, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." These words are as true in relation to spiritual work as pecuniary generosity. The man who imparts a blessing by the very act receives one. It is well known that the best way to be happy yourself is to make some one else so; and the way to be a joyful christian is to be a working one, more especially so if the work engaged in be that of winning souls.

How many christians there are who are always complaining about their want of happiness, and wondering why they lack what others seem to possess. They keep a kind of spiritual thermometer within them which they are always intently studying, and the slightest rise or fall of joy is invariably noticed and registered by them. "Ah," says one of this large family, "I am not so happy to-day as I was yesterday, and I was not quite as happy yesterday as I was the day before. Tuesday's experience falls far short of what I had on Sunday;" and

so this poor soul is everlastingly employed in anatomizing his joy which is the quickest way to kill it altogether. He tries to-day to live on the remembrance of yesterday's happiness, and to feed on experiences that are passed. It is all in vain. Experiences keep no better than manna. That which was sweet yesterday, if kept to-day will "breed worms and stink." It must be fresh morning by morning. But how is this miserable state of things to be altered? How are we to be kept from being suicides to our own bliss? Why by work. "Oh," says the active christian in answer to the question whether he is as happy to-day as yesterday. "I am sure I hardly know, for I have not had time to think; but now you remind me of it, I can say 'yes I am, and I think rather more so.'" We are never so happy as when we are so absorbed in the *cause* of our joy as to forget the joy itself. Work for Christ is a sovereign remedy against frozen experiences. The stagnant pond is coated with ice the first night of autumn hoar frost; but the leaping mountain stream defies the embrace of winter frost though it comes clothed in black. It is too quick for Jack Frost, it has not time to freeze. It is your do-nothing christian that is always shivering with the cold, and it serves him right, he is just the one that ought. The exertion of doing work for Christ keeps the blood dancing through the veins, and keeps the whole man in a healthy glow. If I were to come in contact with a man who was always complaining that he never "felt the thing, although he was continually taking medicine," and who in the course of conversation let out "that he had never been ontside the room in which I found him for five years." I should say, "my dear fellow, you don't want the doctor's stuff, throw it all out of window, come and take a walk, climb over a hill or two, breathe God's fresh air, take a spade and dig the garden, in fact, do anything, but get out of the close atmosphere of this room and you will be all right at once." You smile, friends, but that is just what some of you want. You have been living in the little room of your own heart, doctoring yourself with one prescription after another. Now try this one. Go out and work. Take a class in the school, the infant one would perhaps be the most beneficial; take a district and go round with tracts. Go anywhere, but do come out of the little room, its close air will stifle you and strangle every joyful feeling in its birth. For your own sake as well as others, try and be a blessing, and you yourself will be blessed. Try and water some thirsty plant, and your own garden will be moistened whilst you do it. Try and warm some cold heart, and your own numbness of spirit will depart. Because of the good derived in the effort "he that winneth souls is wise."

5. Winning souls is a work that *tells on eternity*. Other works may revolutionize time, but they leave eternity untouched. They may influence governments and social life to the last moment of time, but there the influence stops, and no power of man can force it forward. But he who wins a soul to Christ is the means of performing a work which, unlike the breaking of a wave upon the shore, flows like the incoming tide over the bar of time, and sends its widening influences far into eternity itself. The subdued cry for mercy that you were the means of causing the sinner to utter, finds its way beyond the little room where in prayer it first found birth, beyond the sanctuary where to all human ears it was unheard,

through boundless expanses of space it finds its way, until at last, in melody that makes the angels sing and God rejoice, it breaks upon the ear of infinite mercy, in the plaintive cry of "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" How precious is the thought, beloved, that we may give a fresh impetus to the songs of heaven, and aid in that satisfaction which Christ feels when he sees of the travail of his soul.

Sixthly and lastly on this point, winning souls is a work *which will influence you in heaven.* I think I can hear some of you saying, "Take care, Sir, what you are saying, for you are treading on dangerous ground." I know it, dear friends, but I repeat the assertion. Think not for a moment that I hold the God-dishonouring lie that heavenly bliss rests on human merit, or that it is proportioned according to human deserts. It would go hard with us all if it were. I know it is all of grace, and so entirely so that not a single foot of ground is left on which pride can stand and boast. I am also certain that every soul in heaven is *perfectly* happy; could not be more so; its bliss is full to overflowing; but I yet hold that some will have more *capacity* for joy than others, and therefore have the most, though none could have more than they possess. I think it was McCheyne, though I will not be sure as to the authorship, who thus illustrates this truth. Suppose there be a number of jars standing in a row, of various sizes, from one of great capacity to one of very small, let them all be filled to the brim with water so that not one could contain a drop more. They are all *perfectly full,* the smallest could not hold another drop without running over, and the largest is but full, and more neither of them can be; but for all that the largest has the most in it. The difference is not in the filling up but in the capacity to hold. So in heaven *all will be perfectly* happy; the water of joy will be to the brim in every experience; but there will be a difference in degrees of capacity, and certainly he will have the greatest capacity who has won most souls to Christ. It must increase the joy of the glorified one, to see those he brought to Jesus revelling in the same sea of bliss as himself. Surely next to seeing our Saviour we shall love to see those who are our "crown of rejoicing." I shall never forget the language of a dear old woman who was among the first I had the joy of bringing to the Saviour. Her ideas of Heaven were as simple and as ardent as her faith. She said, "Oh, Mr. Brown, it won't be long before I am there (pointing upwards); and when I have seen my Saviour and cast my crown at his feet, I shall come and stand upon the *edge* of Heaven and look down to watch for you coming up." For the reasons then I have mentioned, and there are many, many others, he who winneth or attempts to win souls is wise. But not only is wisdom seen in the work, but—and this leads us to our second division on which we shall be very brief.

II. WISDOM IS REQUIRED IN THE WORK.

1. *The nature of the work as suggested in the text shows it.* The word translated "winneth" has at least three references. It refers to the snaring of birds, to the catching of fish, and to the taking of a city.

Now in the accomplishment of all these wisdom is required. It is not any fool who can catch a bird, for as the Psalmist says, "in vain is the snare set in sight of the bird." In the catching of fish it is

requisite to know the right bait to use, the right place to go to, and the right time in which to try. No city will be taken by merely looking at it, there must be effort and strategy. Leaving the first two illustrations alone, let us for a minute or two dwell upon this last. Every soul by nature is like Jericho, "straightly shut up against Joshua" or Jesus; but unlike Jericho, its walls will never fall by merely making a noise. It is a hard place to carry by assault. It has its deep moat of depravity, its frowning portcullis of prejudice and its high walls of unbelief defended by all the powers of hell. In order to capture it there must be holy art employed. Our blessed Saviour, who is in all things our example, is wonderfully so in the way of winning souls. Did you ever carefully study the matchless way in which Christ won the heart of that poor woman of Samaria. When she drew near to him, he did not say to her as so many would, "well, you are an outrageous sinner, I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself;" if he had, in all probability she would have returned to the city with her waterpot either in fear or anger, and never have said, "come see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"

No! far otherwise was his dealing with her. He first wins her sympathy by asking a favour. He excites her womanly curiosity by saying, "*if* thou knewest," and he then leads her gently step by step until finally she is prepared for the announcement, "I that speak unto thee am he." Blessed Jesus, thou who didst speak "as never man spake," we would learn of thee how to win reluctant hearts.

2. *The variety of disposition seen in souls requires it.* What is just the very right thing for one, may be the very wrong thing for another. He would be a strange kind of doctor who only kept one medicine, and no matter what was the nature of the patient's disease, always gave them all a dose from the same bottle. If ever he did effect a cure it would be by a mistake. There are as many, yea, more varieties of soul disease than bodily; and shall we treat the higher part of man in a way we should not dare the inferior? Has the painter only one brush with which he puts in the dark background, and depicts in gentle colours the rainbow on it? Has the sculptor only one chisel with which to strike off the rough edges of the untouched marble block, and put the last delicate line upon the countenance? Certainly not, nor more must we in our far higher work. Experiments which would never be made on unfeeling marble must not be tried on delicate and sensitive souls. When we remember also how long and terribly a soul may suffer through unwise dealing with it—what years, perhaps a lifetime of unhappiness it may endure through our mistake—what need there is to pray. "Lord teach me what to say, how to say it, and when to say it. Help me to be kind but firm—truthful yet gentle—stern yet loving; let no soul be the worse for my tampering with it, but O! make me wise to win it."

III. And now in the third and last place I will TRY AND GIVE SOME HINTS AS TO HOW TO SET ABOUT WINNING SOULS.

In order to win souls they must first *be alarmed.* By this I mean they must be made conscious of the danger of their position. The absolute necessity for conversion in order to be saved must be forced home. The truth that they are either saved or lost—forgiven all their

sins, or not forgiven any—on the road to Heaven or on a journey to Hell—must be brought before them with startling clearness. To talk to a sinner about conversion as if it was some little addenda to life—something that is at least desirable; but not as the *grand necessity* for salvation—is to act the traitor to God and the soul. We must not mind the feelings of the friend receiving somewhat of a shock; it will do them no harm, and far better to be awoke from a pleasing dream *now*, than by the icy hand of death, when it is too late. He will never win many souls who keeps in the backgrounnd all that is calculated to alarm them. The first step towards being saved is when the sinner feels himself lost; and it is when he feels himself within a step of Hell that he is just putting his foot on the road to Heaven. The water will never be valued until the thirst is felt. The pardon will be unsought so long as its need is unthought of. The beauties of the Saviour will only be seen when that which he saves *from* has been in some measure understood by the soul. The sinner's danger *must* be shown him.

2. *They must be allured.* Faithfulness alone will not be sufficient, there must be love also. Souls may be alarmed *from* indifference, but they must be drawn *to* Jesus. The peace and joy there is in him must be told them as felt by ourselves. The sweet music of the gospel must be sung until some note awakens an echo in their heart. It is for us to hold before their eyes the joys and bliss of pardon; friendship with Christ; and Heaven at last, and so

"Allure to brighter worlds and lead the way."

3. *They must be taken by the hand.* Made to feel you do indeed take an interest in their safety; that it is no mere officialism on your part. The manner of speech often has more power in it than the matter. The eye that glistens with the tear is sometimes the most effective part of an appeal. If you would win, you must not stand at a distance; you must come down from the pedestal of your dignity, and follow in the footsteps of your Lord, of whom it was said "this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

4. They who would win must *show they are won themselves.* A life that gives rise to doubts whether you are a christian or no, will prove a fatal barrier to winning others. Light as snow flakes, and as soon trodden in the mire, are words that have no corresponding life to back them up. Let there be cause for a doubt as to your own conversion, and you may rest assured that not many will ever be won by you.

There are some here to whom the subject applies not, for for they themselves are not yet saved. Friend, would you be? Is there the faintest desire in thy heart after the Saviour? If so, thank God for it, for the Spirit has commenced his blessed work within your heart. And now, cast yourself at once upon the finished work of Christ, accept him as thy only Saviour. Stake all thine eternal interests upon his atoning death. From this day forth let Christ's blood and righteousness be thine only trust and thou shalt be saved. The Lord grant it for Jesus sake. Amen.

Scripture Read, Philippians ii.
Hymns sung out of "Our own Hymn Book."—386, 473, 545.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

IS THERE A HELL?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 12TH, 1869, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"What shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?"
1 PETER iv.—17.

I am free to confess, dear friends, that I never came upon this platform with a greater sense of responsibility weighing upon me than I do this evening. I think I can in some measure take the language of the prophet as my own, and exclaim "The burden of the Lord." It is only the deep conviction that the subject demands an investigation which has induced me to select it as the subject of our evening's meditation. The subject is in itself so immense, the destinies involved so terrible and eternal, that in approaching the subject one seems to hear a voice saying "take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place on which thou standest is holy ground." The subject lies in the answer which scripture gives to the question of the text, "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"—or in other words—"What is the doom of those who die impenitent?" Is there a Hell or is there not?

The truths of God have suffered as severe a persecution as have ever the believers in them. No martyr burnt at Smithfield or tortured in the Inquisition of Spain, suffered worse treatment than has the word of God, for which he died. Texts have been broken upon the wheel of unsanctified reason and put upon the rack of atheistic philosophy until meanings and interpretations have been dragged from them that they never possessed, and were never intended to convey. Men, not content to take their plain and apparent teaching—that which has been for centuries so clearly stamped upon their brow that none thought of any other—now endeavour to show their superior spiritual knowledge, by declaring that the whole Christian church has for centuries been mistaken; and that it is for them to prove that the doctrines held by God's saints for over eighteen hundred years are nothing else than "traditional prejudices."

Whilst the attacks were confined to minor truths (if it is for us to call any truth a minor one) it was perhaps wisest for God's watchmen to take but little notice, and continue straight on the simple work of preaching the gospel; but waxing bolder, they now attempt to under-

mine the very foundations of the faith of the church. The blows are now aimed, not merely at the minarets of the temple of truth, but at the deepest laid stones of its basis. The very existence of Hell itself is now called in question. That which we in our ignorance always thought beyond the shadow of a doubt is now declared not only to be doubtful, but merely a prejudice of man's, and something irreconcilable with the nature of God. Most certainly *if* this be true we have indeed been under a most grand delusion. When the psalmist said "the wicked shall be turned into hell," we were simple enough to believe that he meant hell, but it appears he must have meant something else altogether different from what we suppose by the word. Are we prepared, beloved, at once to give up the faith of our fathers, and adopt the new-fangled notions of would-be divines? I trust not. But in order to have our faith strengthened, let us with deepest humility, reverence and prayerfulness, try and find out the answer of Scripture to the awfully-momentous question of the text, "What *shall* the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

In order that the subject may have a close personal bearing upon us all, notice the persons concerning whose end the question is asked. It is not "what shall be the end of the open and licentiously profligate?" Not "what shall be the end of the profane swearer that belches out his blasphemous oaths?" Nor "the end of him whose very life is a crying disgrace." No such thing. Were it so, many might say, "the matter has nothing to do with me, for I am neither the one nor the other." No! the question is, What will be the end of those who, whatever other good qualities they may possess, yet die without having obeyed the invitations of the gospel?—what will be the end of those who have never complied with the command "believe on the Son of God?" To put the question in a form that will give it a more tremendous interest —What will be the end or ultimate doom of that portion of this evening's congregation which dies without having rendered any obedience to the gospel of God?

May the Lord enable us to speak upon this theme in the right spirit and in the right way. It was that noble man of God, McCheyne, who, when a brother minister told him that on the previous Sabbath he had been preaching upon Hell, asked, "Were you able to preach it *with tenderness*, brother? God is our witness that in such a spirit we desire to preach it to-night. If we seem to say hard and severe things, believe they are said in love. Love to your souls, which would rather wound than permit them to go chloroformed to perdition with the pernicious doubt of its existence. With heart full to overflowing then, and eyes directed to the Master for teaching, we will try and answer the question "what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God."

First, NOT ANNIHILATION. Doubtless many of you as well as myself have read with surprise some letters that have lately appeared in a widely circulated religious paper; letters written by men (one in particular) whose names are held in high repute by many. In these letters sentiments are expressed so perfectly contrary to all we have ever been led to believe, that they challenge attention. I will not

attempt to quote from memory, but read you a few lines from the letter of one known by name to most. It is as follows:—

> "The dogma of eternal suffering is utterly unknown to Scripture and perfectly irreconciliable with the character of God: .... immortality is to be found *only* in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. I entreat Christian men to lay aside traditional prejudices, and look this great question fairly in the face. The "hell" of theology is the great weapon of infidelity, and I long to see this weapon wrested from its hands."

Now we may be mistaken, but it seems to us that these words teach as clearly as any words can, the annihilation of the sinner; if they mean not this, we are at a loss to know what they *do* mean. We have read them over and over again in the hope of coming to some other conclusion, but have been obliged time after time to come to the same decision. If there be no immortality apart from union to Christ, (and there is no union to Christ apart from obedience to the gospel) then the ultimate end of them that obey not the gospel must be annihilation.

Let me here say before going into the particulars of what that punishment is, that *future punishment of some kind seems essential to the moral government of God.* To quote from President Edwards (to whom I acknowledge my indebtedness for many thoughts this evening) "unless there be such a state it will certainly follow, that God in fact maintains no moral government over the world of mankind. For otherwise it is apparent that there's no such thing as rewarding or punishing mankind, according to any visible rule, or, indeed, according to any order or method whatsoever." Notice specially this sentence. "There is nothing in God's disposals toward men *in this world*, to make his distributive justice and judicial equity visible, but all things are in the greatest confusion." Take away future punishment and is it not so? The wicked prosper on every hand. Sin walks along triumphantly, while virtue is often pushed to the wall. The base and the mean succeed, whilst the true and the right often languish. The unscrupulous tradesman who sticks at no dirty trick in his trade, makes his fortune and retires; and the godly tradesman next door, after a manly struggle against his difficulties is obliged to succumb, a ruined man. The scales of God are not, and never were meant to be even on earth, though they are adjusted to a hair in eternity.

It was this very thing that was David's difficulty, and this very explanation that removed it. Will all of you who have bibles turn to the seventy-third Psalm, and commencing from the third verse, read for yourselves.

> "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked,
> For there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm.
> They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.
> When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me."

There you have beloved, David's source of trouble, and many others have had it besides him; but see in the next verse what caused his murmurings to cease and convinced him of the equity of God.

> "Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end."

And that end thrown into the balances righted them. Yet again.

There was once a godless wretch clothed in purple, who fared sumptuously every day, and lying at his gate was a godly beggar whose sores were licked by the rich man's dogs. Here is a mystery. Yes, but one soon solved. Affairs were righted after death. The rich man died and went to hell. The poor man died, and was carried by an angelic escort to Abraham's bosom, whilst God's perfect equity was taught the rich man, in those memorable words—"Son, remember that thou in *thy life time* receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

In order that God's infinitely judicial equity may be manifested, a state of future punishment is indispensable. But the question is, *what is that punishment?* Is it merely a cessation of being, a want of immortality, or in other words annihilation. I venture to answer "No;" for if it be so it lacks that which is certainly a necessity, in order to make it a punishment at all, viz.—a knowledge of its infliction. That can be no punishment which I never feel and of which I am never conscious. It seems to me to stand to reason that the punishment of the sinner must be such as to make him see its connexion with his guilt, and make him learn that the threatenings of God cannot be despised with impunity. These lessons can never be learnt by annihilation. Moreover, the Scriptures declare that the sinner "shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty," which, if it implies anything, implies that the wrath shall be actually tasted, which it never could be in an utter want of existence. Nay, in that same verse I think it states, "he shall see his destruction," or in other words, the sinner shall behold his misery and doom, which would be a sheer impossibility if that doom were annihilation.

Another argument is that *the fact of there being various degrees in punishment makes it impossible for that punishment to be annihilation.*

Nothing is more clearly taught in the Word than that all men receive not the same amount of punishment. Let me quote a few passages.

Looking upon the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, Our Saviour said, "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you." To Capernaum, the scene of his mightiest works, he declared "it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." He it was who pronounced the doom of him who knew his Lord's will, but did it not, to be greater than that of him who never knew it. It was he who turning upon those whited sepulchres—the Pharisees—who could pray all day in the streets, and prey all night on widows' houses, declared that they should receive the *greater* damnation, and the greater implies the less. But if annihilation be the sinner's doom, what room is there for any degrees whatsoever? I can no more be *less* than annihilated than I can be *more*. This theory at once puts all punishment upon a perfect equality.

All that is said about the sinner's doom shuts out the idea of annihilation. Concerning Judas, that wretched, double-dyed traitor, our Lord said, it would have been better for him "if he had never been born." Why so? Surely because he foresaw that the traitor's

punishment was something so dreadful, that never to have seen the light would have been a boon. Had cessation of being been his punishment, there would have been no need for such a statement, for never having been born, and being annihilated, come to one and the same thing. Kindly turn with me to a few passages, and see if they do not bear upon their very face future torment rather than future nothingness. The first you will find in Luke xii, the fourth and fifth verses. Let us read them, they are our Master's words. "And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him, which, after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear him." Here there is certainly something more than death threatened; there is death *and hell.* Turn to Matthew xiii, which we read at the commencement of this service. Read the 41st and 42nd verses. "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Can annihilation be compared to a furnace of fire, and can annihilated men be said to wail and gnash their teeth? Impossible. Yet once again refer to Mark 9 from the 43rd verse. "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter in life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." It is plain that here Christ meant something more than the grave by the word "hell." For the grave-worm *does* die, but *this one* never. In the grave is no fire, but in this hell there *is.*

The resurrection says, "No annihilation." That all will have to rise, whether saint or sinner, is certainly taught. For there to be any mistake about that seems impossible. Now if the sinner is to be annihilated, when is it to take place? Before the resurrection? Impossible. For how then is he to arise? After the resurrection? Then where has his soul been from the moment of death until the resurrection morn? Besides which, what is the sinner's doom after the resurrection? Turn to John v., the 28th and 29th verses, "the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

The doom of the sinner and the doom of the devil are identical. The verdict passed is "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The master and the servants share one common woe. Is the devil's punishment annihilation? Most assuredly we find out to our cost it is not yet and that it never will be, scripture sets beyond a shadow of a doubt, for it declares that he "shall be tormented day and night *for ever and ever.*"

Satan would leap for joy, and clash his chains in mad glee if he could look forward to such a termination of his torments. But his doom is for ever and ever, and the wicked are to share it.

Lastly, *the atonement is an argument for the existence of Hell.* From what does my Saviour save me? simply from cessation of being, or from a short residence in Hell, to be followed by total forget-

fulness of all its pains? The very idea is incompatible with the ransom price he paid. Gethsemane's bloody sweat—the bloodier scourging in Pilate's Hall—and the awful death of Calvary—all seem to point to a punishment beyond description. If I believe (as I do) that Christ suffered in his own person the pangs and anguish I must otherwise have endured, O tell me, what must they have been that forced from the quivering lips of incarnate love that terrific death-shriek, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani!" "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" O, take your stand, believer, at the foot of that cross, stained crimson with your Saviour's heart's-blood; look up into that face of anguish; listen to those deep-drawn sighs of misery; and then ask yourself "from what kind of a doom *must such* a sacrifice have rescued me?" What then shall be our answer to the question, "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" We have only one to give, and that we utter with melting heart; it is "Hell," and that hell one of torment.

Having tried to prove that the punishment of the wicked will be no mere cessation of being, but actual torment, I now turn to my second answer to the text, namely:—

II. THAT IT WILL NOT BE MERELY A TEMPORARY PUNISHMENT.

The generality of those who hold the view of immortality being only in union with Christ still believe that the sinner when he dies *does* enter an actual hell as described in scripture, but that he only remains there a limited time, and is at last doomed to non-existence. Others there are who, though believing in the immortality of the soul apart from union with Christ, yet hold that after the sinner has endured for some period, either short or long, the terrors of hell, he will come from thence forgiven and purified, and join the ransomed throng in heaven. Without attempting to compare the merits or demerits of the two theories, I shall try and prove what both equally deny—the eternity of suffering. The most general argument brought against eternal punishment is that *it is opposed to the perfect justice of God.* "The punishment" they say "being eternal must at last exceed the sin." That, we reply, has yet to be proved, and if we can but show that the punishment is only proportionate to the sin, then the charge of injustice falls to the ground. In order to understand aright the nature of the sin, you must bear in mind the being against whom the sin is committed. It is against Jehovah, the infinite one; against one who is infinitely worthy of honour and worship, and against one to whom we are under infinite obligations. If then God and his gospel be infinitely worthy of obedience, they "who obey not the gospel of God" are guilty of an infinite sin, and not a word can be said against the justice that visits an infinite sin with an infinite punishment. Do you find in *our* courts of justice that the length of the punishment is regulated by the length of time the offence took in being committed? The act of forgery or theft took but, perhaps, five minutes, and yet the punishment for that act may be transportation "for the term of natural life" and who impugns the justice of the sentence.

"But," say others, "*God is infinitely merciful, and the very idea of eternal suffering is opposed to that attribute.*" It may be according

to your idea of that mercy, and yet not against that mercy itself. Remember God is *as* just as he is merciful. His mercy provided the gospel; his mercy invited the sinner to obey it; his mercy stood waiting to save: but the sinner spurned his mercy offered, and declined "to obey the gospel." Then as he would not have the mercy he must have the justice. Justice never interfered with the sweet work of mercy and mercy can never interfere with the righteous acts of justice. God's mercy is not a mere passion over which he has no control, and which steps in to overturn the execution of his own righteous judgments. That misery and sorrow *are* compatible with God's being merciful can be seen in a hundred instances around us. Shall we say "he has ceased to be merciful" because sometimes we hear of an awful colliery explosion in which hundreds are suffocated in a moment, and a whole neighbourhood plunged in grief? Does not infinite mercy look on, and yet stretch out no hand to save, when a whole ship's crew and crowds of passengers (as in the case of the "London") sink in the wild waves?

That mercy *can* permit eternal suffering is proved by the fact that it *does* in the case of Satan and the rebel angels. Why should it permit it to be their doom and not ours? Is their sin greater than ours? Certainly not, there is only this difference, that they never rejected an offered Saviour, which the sinner has. Dispel the thought at once, believer, from your minds, that eternal punishment is opposed to the mercy of God.

There will be nothing in hell to refine or alter the sinner. Hell fire is no "refiner's fire," to purge the dross away. Hell's torments are no "fuller's soap," to cleanse the guilty soul. The sinner will be as great a sinner in hell as ever he was on earth. His hatred to God in hell will be as fierce as its fire. The very idea of improvement seems to me preposterous. Shall they without the means of grace become what they never did when they had them? They had Moses and the prophets, and they believed them not, and scripture says that if that testimony be refused none other would ever be accepted. But in hell they will not even have these. The restraints also of earth will all be wanting, and sin will consequently be rampant. There will be no mother's tears, no godly father's entreaties, no ministry of love. All the barriers will be removed, and sin and hatred will roll through the infernal regions with unrestrained licence. He who was bad on earth will be worse in hell. In such a school as this think ye the sinner will learn to love his God and obey his Gospel?

There is nothing in the Word about hell torments having a termination.—Think not although we preach it, we delight in the thought. Could we hold out a hope that those who are now lost should ever escape from their torments, believe us we would do so with joy. But we search in vain for any ground for such a hope. Scripture holds out none, and therefore we dare not. Listen to the solemn words of inspiration and see if thou can'st extract the shadow of a hope from them that Hell is not eternal torment. "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with *everlasting* burnings?" "He will burn up the chaff with *unquenchable* fire." "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for *ever and ever*." "These shall

go away into *everlasting* punishment." The same word is used to describe the duration of misery as is employed to describe the duration of bliss. Let one mean anything else than "for ever," and the other does also. If it be possible for sinners to leave hell, it is equally possible for the saints to lose Heaven. The verdict of Scripture is, that the torment of the lost shall last for ever and ever, for ever and ever.

I would now occupy the few minutes that remain, in trying to apply these solemn truths to your heart. Be not deceived, sinner, about your future doom by the sophistry of the present day. I entreat you by the value of your own soul, tread under foot these wretched theories, which, like opium, will lull you into a deadly sleep, only to awake in hell. It will be no consolation when there, to remember that when on earth you doubted its existence—and when by awful experience you have learnt that hell *is* eternal, you will gain no comfort from the thought that you had always doubted it. Awake! Awake!! Awake!!! sinner, to thy danger. Hell is no ugly dream to be laughed at in the morning. It is a dread reality. It is no mere wretched scare-crow, placed in scripture to frighten children—no mere stock theme for the minister when all else fails him. It is the *certain* end of every sinner that dies in his sins. If indeed this be the case, then how momentous is the question "am I saved?" Poor, careless, thoughtless one, come in here this evening you scarce know why.—"Flee from the wrath to come." Worldly pleasure seeker—cold professor, "flee from the wrath to come." O sinners all, I implore you by the reality and eternity of hell to "flee from the wrath to come." Do you say, "Where?" I answer, "to Christ." Hide in the cleft of that "rock of ages," and thou art safe. As a lost sinner, as one who deserves eternal wrath, cast thy whole soul upon Christ and thou art secure. Trust him only, trust him wholly, trust him now and thou shalt be eternally saved.

The Lord have mercy upon all this great company, and grant that none may ever find out by experience that there is a hell and that an eternal one. God grant it may be so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Scripture Read, Matthew xiii. 18—43 verses.

Hymns sung out of "Our own Hymn Book."—100 Part I.—552, 522.

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The necessity for a larger building not only continues but increases. Towards obtaining one, much has been done, but much yet remains to be done. Will you help in the work?

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

A NATIONAL CHURCH UNSCRIPTURAL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 10TH, 1869, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence."—JOHN xviii.—36.

"JESUS answered." Whom did he answer? Why, that miserable, vacillating, time-serving Pilate, who prompted by men with shrewder intellects than his own, had asked our Master the cunning question, "Art thou King of the Jews?" A question better adapted to the ends of the prosecution can hardly be imagined; its answer, whether in the negative or affirmative, was equally surrounded by difficulties. In the manner which Pilate meant, the answer would be 'No;' but in a sense which never entered the head of the governor of Judea, the answer was 'Yes.' To have given therefore an unqualified negative or an unexplained affirmative would have lead to misunderstanding on the part alike of friends and foes. To have answered the question with a bare 'No' would have appeared at first blush to be giving the lie to many of his previous statements in which he had claimed regal power; and to have simply answered 'Yes,' would have seemed to give grounds for the accusation that he was a competitor for Cæsar's throne. Christ therefore, who in the language of Paul, "witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate," gave an answer glittering with the wisdom of divinity. He accepts the title of king, with the explanation that his "kingdom is not of this world," and therefore cannot possibly be a rival one to Rome. He repudiates the idea of his kingdom being one of earthly state and pomp, or having anything to do with earthly governments. It was established by no imperial legions nor buttressed up by sword and spear. Its throne was not in some proud, wealthy capital, but in the hearts of all his subjects. Its laws were not the acts of some imperial worldly parliament, but the loving utterances of his own lips.

This declaration of the spirituality of Christ's kingdom is as true in the nineteenth century as when first it fell from the Master's lips, and the necessity for it greater, for then the very thought of union between the church and state had never been entertained by the subjects of his realm, whilst now unhappily it is an accomplished fact. There never was greater necessity than in the present day for declaring in the most unmistakeable language the spirituality of Christ's church. There is a needs-be to bring it, with all its outward pomp and show, face to face with the words spoken by the Saviour in Pilate's hall, "my kingdom is not of this world."

Should I this evening give utterance to things that appear stern, and lacking in the spirit of charity towards other brethren in Christ, believe me they are so in appearance only. It is quite possible to love the men whilst you hate and denounce the system with which they are connected, and I for one cannot but love and honour many in the established church; nor can I ever forget that the man who was the means of leading me to Jesus was then, and is still, in her communion. Besides which, much of what I want to say will apply with equal force to many who term themselves dissenters, and who yet seem to forget that "nonconformity" is something more than a mere distinguishing title. Many of our churches are pandering too much to the prejudices and whims of the world, losing their power for testimony by trying to become all things to all men, if by any means they may *please* all. I feel I shall need much help from on high in treading upon what some would term dangerous ground; help that I may not needlessly wound the feelings of any, and help that I may be able fearlessly to proclaim what with all my heart I believe to be the truth, though that proclamation may condemn the system and practice of many. I shall endeavour first and very briefly *to try and explain what Christ here means by his kingdom*—and secondly, *direct your attention to what is said about the kingdom*, namely, that it is "not of this world."

I. First then—WHAT DOES CHRIST MEAN BY THE TERM "MY KINGDOM?" I will be as brief as possible in trying to explain this definition as I am anxious to devote most of my time and strength to the second division. It means, the empire Christ came to found on earth, or in other words the Church which he purchased with his blood. Although our Lord came on earth as man, and that a poor, sorrowful, despised one, yet did he come commissioned from heaven to found an empire which should outlast and outlive all powers and dominations then existing. His deepest humiliation laid the deepest

foundation for his future glory. Every step he took downward, but added power and stability to the massive basis of the kingdom he came to found. He laid the foundation in agony, and cemented it with his blood. Upon that immovable foundation, he reared his heavenly temple, composed (as we learnt from the chapter read at the commencement of the service) of living stones, and which is destined to grow until the last elect shall have been gathered in—the last stone raised upon the walls, with shoutings of "grace," "grace."

The empire of Christ consists of those *who own allegiance to him.* It was once far otherwise with them; with the weapons of the rebel grasped tightly in their hands, and with hearts burning with hell's hatred they blasphemously shouted "we will not have this man to reign over us." They spurned his easy yoke, they scorned his gentle laws, and cast from off them his loving cords. They were of the world, and therefore they hated the kingdom that condemned it. But now all has changed. When the hour of the "day of his power" struck, omnipotent grace came forth to war. With a single stroke the day was won. Overpowered by the might of love the rebels grounded their arms at the foot of Calvary and tearfully cried for mercy. They found it full and free, and then with gratitude that knew no bounds, they offered themselves as loyal subjects to the one they once despised, Lovingly did their Lord receive them and enrol them as the members of his kingdom. And now listen to the shout that rises from all quarters of his wide domain. "All hail! All hail! King Jesus! We acknowledge thee to be the Lord. We bow before thy sceptre. We worship at thy throne. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him Lord of all."

The empire of Jesus consists of those *in whose hearts he reigns.* In every human breast there is by nature some hideous hateful Dagon; some proud usurper of the Saviour's throne. But in the hearts of those who are included in the kingdom, this Dagon has been hurled with ignominy to the ground. The ark of the Lord has entered, and before it the idol has fallen. Christ has come with kingly tread, ascended the steps, and taken his rightful position. The heart's affections bow to him, and the whole man is under his control, whilst his daily language is

> "Nothing save Jesus would I know;
> My friend and my companion Thou!
> Lord, seize my heart, assert Thy right,
> And put all other loves to flight."

The kingdom of Jesus is, as we have already said, *his Church.* And what is the Church? Strange that such a question should need to be asked or answered: yet not more strange than true, for no word is more wretchedly misunderstood than this simple one of Church. If you ask some what they understand by the word Church, they will point to some big building with spire or tower, ornamented with glittering cross or less pretentious weather cock, and say "that is the Church." God forbid that it should be, for it is most certainly of this world. The glorious word "Church," is never more degraded or ill-used than when applied to a heap of bricks and mortar, it may be a *parish building*, but a parish church never. And here I would utter my protest against the fashionable error that is fast gaining ground in some of our dissenting communities. The age is too respectable for old fashioned "Meeting Houses" and "Tabernacles," but on every hand we have congregational churches and baptist churches springing up, prostituting a name belonging only to a blood-bought throng, to the work of the bricklayer. The building is no more the Church than the house is the family, and it is nonsense if not blasphemy to call it so. Nor is the Church *a mere society*. To hear some talk of "forming a church," one would imagine that it was a kind of religious building society that only needed its manager in the shape of the minister, and its directors by the name of deacons. The moment we place the Church on the level of a society we do it foul dishonour. The Church moreover does not consist of *a visible union of believers*. *A* Church may, but *the* Church does not. There are many who are in membership with our churches that are not with Christ's. Many whose names are to be found in the church books in the vestry, but not to be found anywhere in God's great Church Book of Life.

What *is* the Church then? The Church is a chosen, redeemed, blood-bought, blood-washed multitude, confined to no country, race or clime; to be found in all lands, among all nations, speaking all languages; to be found in connexion with all classes, and in all denominations, and many in no denomination at all. The Church consists of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and are as sinners trusting alone in him for salvation.

Perhaps no better definition of the Church can be found, than in the following lines of an unknown poet:—

"A band of faithful men
Met for God's worship in some humble room,
Or, screened from foes by midnight's star-lit gloom,
On hill side or lone glen,
To hear the counsels of his holy word,
Pledged to each other and their common Lord.

These, few as they may be,
Compose a Church, such as in pristine age
Defied the tyrant's steel, the bigot's rage;
For when but two or three,
What'er the place in faith's communion meet,
There, with Christ present, is a Church complete."

Yes, friends, the place has nought to do with the Church. It matters not whether it meet beneath the stupendous dome of a cathedral or in the dim transepts of the abbey; the gothic building or unfurnished barn; in the dark catacombs beneath the city, or under the spreading boughs of the forest tree. In all places it is equally "the Church," the kingdom of our Lord.

One thought more, and I will close this first division of our subject. The kingdom of Christ *shall last for ever*. Will those of you who have Bibles turn to the second chapter of Daniel and read with me the forty-fourth verse. You will there find a glorious prophecy concerning the kingdom. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." Unlike other empires, age shall never decay its strength, nor time cause it to become defunct. The glory of other empires has faded into insignificance. Where is the martial pomp and prowess of Rome, before whose eagle banner the world trembled? Where the magnificence of vast Babylon, or the brilliant influence of Greece? Gone—but the kingdom set up of God abideth still, with undiminished glory and ever-increasing influence. Its sun has not gone down nor reached its meridian height. It has stood unshaken amidst the crash of empires and the fall of dynasties; and should the day ever dawn when, according to an eloquent writer, some New Zealander shall sit upon the broken arch of London Bridge and view the silent ruins of this myriad-peopled city, then shall the kingdom of Christ have upon it the dew of its youth. And when this world, with all its proud domains shall have been consumed in the general fire, then transplanted into Heaven, shall this kingdom shine, the only one that has outlived the general wreck of time.

II. LET US NOW CONSIDER WHAT IS SAID CONCERNING THIS KINGDOM. It is "not of this world"—that is, that it is not worldly in its constitution or relationships; that it is purely spiritual, and intended to be entirely separate from the world, and devoid of all that pomp and grandeur which is usually associated with kingdoms. Let us look at this great truth in detail. The first question arising from the idea of a kingdom is, who is its king? Our answer is, *one not of this world.* In our text, the Saviour claims the kingdom as his own, and thereby teaches the truth that He, and He alone is its king. For any one else to assume imperial power, or in anywise whatsoever hold the reins of the government of this kingdom in his hands, is to commit an act of high treason against "the King immortal and invisible." The moment an earthly monarch puts his hands upon the ark of the Lord, we venture to declare he is exceeding his jurisdiction, and touching that over which he has no control whatever. As subjects of the realm of Christ, we acknowledge his Headship, and his only.

"One army of the living God,
To his command we bow,"

and we bow to no one else. As soldiers of his army, we will bend to him the knee until the plumes of our helmets mingle with the dust, but to others, be they King or Queen, we may not, must not, will not bow in anything pertaining to this kingdom. Let us be zealous friends, of the glory of Christ in this particular, and acknowledge no other Head than Him, and recognise no other jurisdiction than His. The want of this is the crying evil in the Church of England (so called). Worse than any other of its errors, for it is the foundation of them all, is its union with, or rather subjection to the state. The reigning monarch, whether good, bad, or indifferent, is forsooth its head and ruler. The bishop appoints the incumbent. The premier appoints the bishop, and the throne appoints the premier, and then incumbent and bishop declare that Christ's kingdom "is not of this world." *Treason* to the kingship of Christ is stamped upon the brow of "Church and State." But let us go a step further. Not only is the King himself not of this world, but when he came, he came in a *manner* not of this world. He was born in no room of state, but in a lowly manger—for there was no room even in an inn for the Monarch of this empire; common swaddling clothes were his royal robes. To humble shepherds did his heralds announce his coming. His courtiers were rough fishermen. The only triumphant entrance he ever made

into Jerusalem, was made sitting "meek and lowly" upon the foal of an ass, whilst the children shouted his praises. He only wore a crown once, and then it was one of thorns. His hands but once grasped a sceptre, and then it was a reed given him in derision. The only exaltation the world ever gave him was upon the cross, and his grave was the gift of charity. Let then the Church be like its head, and learn of him to forego the emoluments, the pomp, and distinctions of the world. The King was not of this world; then shame to the subjects who accept what he refused.

2. *Its institution was not of this world.* The church has no cause to touch its hat to any one. It is under no debt of obligation to mortal man. It is the child of God, not the offspring of earthly royalty or wisdom. Its existence it owes alone to him mentioned in the verse we just read "the *God of Heaven* shall set up a kingdom." He set it up, and that without the help of man. Monarchs founded it not. Princes formed it not. Nor is it the creation of a state. Neither the world nor the world's potentates gave birth to it. It is in its origin most emphatically "not of this world." So far from the world aiding its institution, it has been set up in spite of the world's most bitter opposition. Had it been of the world, then the world would have loved its own, but as it came from above it hated it. Had the world been able to have had its own way, it would long ere this have stamped the church out with the iron heel of persecution, dripping with the blood of the innocents. In all ages the church has been the bush burning with fire, and the only reason for the fact that it has never been consumed is that God is in the bush. Do you want to know what the world has done for the church? I reply, "done its best to exterminate it." Let the amphitheatre of Rome, with its sand clotted with the blood of martyrs, tell how much the church owes its existence to the world's kind forbearance and help. Let those silent Alpine peaks find tongue, and tell how their eternal snows were stained to a gory red with the heart's-blood of the brave Waldenses. Let the hideous walls of an inquisition confess how they have rung and re-echoed with the shrieks of racked and tortured confessors. Let old Smithfield itself recount the tale of those human bonfires, kindled by the world's malice. The united testimony of all is this, that Christ's kingdom in its origin is not of this world.'

3. *Its subjects are not.* There is not a single man, woman or

child, who is truly a subject of Christ and a member of his kingdom, concerning whom it may not be said "he or she is not of this world." All the members of Christ's church have been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." No man is born by nature a child of this kingdom; were it so the kingdom would at once be of this world, which it is not. To be a subject of an earthly empire requires but one birth, but to be a subject of Christ's kingdom requires *two*. Every child of God has that in him which all the world could never give. He is an unearthly man, and it is his mission to make it day by day more evident that he and the world are opposed to each other in spirit and practice. He is the "salt of the earth," that is to counteract its putridity, not to blend with it. He is a "light in the world," to illumine its darkness, not to be lost in it.

Moreover it is not in the power of man to introduce a subject into this kingdom; for, were it so, then again the kingdom would be of this world, which it is not. The national church may declare in its service that the child is by baptism made an inheritor of the kingdom, and some dissenters may imagine their baptism in riper years has enrolled them among its subjects, but they are both miserably mistaken, as they will find out to their cost, if they be not born again, and so brought into the kingdom by a way that is not of this world. Search Christ's realm, I mean *His* Church from end to end, and you will fail to discover a single unconverted man. Written over the portals in indellible characters is, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

To keep the visible church pure is an imperative duty; and although terribly painful, it is far better to exercise discipline, than have a character known to be of the world as a recognised member. But what can be said of a church which, like the national one, embraces profligates and saints alike, and has in her communion men concerning whose utter unfitness for church fellowship there cannot be a shadow of a doubt? Only one thing can be said, and that is that such a church is in direct contradiction to the teaching of this text.

4. *Its defence is not.* Just as the church owes nothing to kings and parliaments for its origin, so is it equally independent of them for its defence and support. It requires no imperial legislation to maintain its existence, nor armies to subdue its foes. It thrives best when left alone, and grows the fastest when unaided by the world. As sure as

ever the shield of state is held over it, it languishes and pines. The church has never thrived and flourished through the world's assistance but *against* it. The influence of the world has never been an atmosphere in which the church has grown a healthy life. In fact it was when she carried her life in her hand she flourished most. It was the blood of the martyrs not the smiles of government that was her seed. The church that nestles under the wing of any state is only smothered not strengthened by the warmth. A church pioneered by the sword and buttressed by a government is the weakest church on earth, and one that is doomed to die. Cast your eye but across the channel and see in poor Ireland's experience how utter a failure that church is which depends for its existence upon the money and patronage of a state. Well may the church exclaim "save me from my friends, I can deliver myself from my enemies." Were the world to withdraw to-morrow all its patronage from the church it would be none the worse, but so much the better for the loss, for the kingdom "is not of this world."

5. *Its laws are not.* On this point I need not dwell, as I have already said as much, when I tried to prove its King was not. The laws which are binding on the church are only those which have been framed in heaven, and are transcribed into God's statute book the Bible, and we laugh all others to scorn. I can hardly imagine a more humiliating sight than a people's parliament, discussing and debating and deciding the affairs of a church as if it were merely some railway company. Christ's kingdom is so entirely spiritual and so absolutely separate from the world, that to attempt to govern it by worldly laws is as impossible as wicked. "My kingdom is not of this world," therefore the world has no ability to meddle with its government.

6. *Its commerce is not.* No kingdom on the face of the whole earth has such a commerce, or rejoices in such a trade as the kingdom of our Lord. It traffics in the costliest and choicest things, and all its merchants are merchant princes. Its ships are never wrecked. Its bank, for it has but one, possesses wealth that is infinite, and therefore can never break. None who have ever engaged in her commerce have been known to fail. Her trade is nearly all import, and that on an enormous scale. Morning, noon and night, yea, every hour of the day, are her ships returning to her ports laden to the water's edge with untold wealth. True, she only trades with one port, but that one is sufficient to supply the needs of the whole kingdom and make the fortune of every subject. To drop the metaphor, or rather explain it—

the church's commerce is "not of this world." The port with which she trades is the port of Heaven. Her vessels are her prayers, some larger and some smaller, yet all equally insured against shipwreck; the faintest sigh as well as the most eloquent petition reaches the ear of God. All come back laden with blessing, for never was praying breath spent in vain. The costly, precious wares she is constantly receiving, consist of such treasures as—pardon—peace—joy—contentment—and holiness—all of which are "precious things of Heaven." Her export consists of—thanksgiving—gratitude—love—devotion. But O, did I not say very rightly that her trade is nearly all *import?* What poor returns we make for the mercies that are literally heaped upon us. How lightly laden are our ships of praise. How poor and weak our highest love and deepest gratitude.

"I cannot serve Him as I ought;
No works have I to boast;
Yet would I glory in the thought,
That I should owe Him most."

Now you will see, dear friends, that the commerce we have just described is not of this world, nor does it deal with the sordid things of earth. Far different is the commerce in which the church, which *is* of this world, is engaged, I mean the hateful trade in "livings." One has now but to look into the columns of a church organ of news, to see "living" after "living" advertised as mere business speculations, whilst sometimes the beauty of the scenery and the smallness of the parish are mentioned as enhancing the value of the property. Such a traffic is a crying shame to England, and a blot upon her fame. Language too strong and scathing it is impossible to use, in the denunciation of so infamous a trade. There is not a member of the established church present who (if his heart be right with God) will not join me in the prayer, that this great disgrace may be swept from off the land. Not in such commerce as this, which is nothing else than a "trade in souls," is the church to engage. Let her remember that our Lord said "my kingdom is not of this world."

7. *Its precepts are not.* Herein does the church's un-worldliness shine transcendently. "Do to others as they do to you" is the maxim of the world. Do to others as *ye would* that they should do to you is the precept of this kingdom. "Pay him back in his own coin" is the precept of the world. "Pay him back in Heaven's coinage" is the maxim of the church, and that coinage is as follows, "if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou

shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." "One good turn deserves another" is the proverb of the world." "One bad turn deserves a good one" is the teaching of the kingdom. "Resist and retaliate" are the mottoes of the world. "If he smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also" is the command of our King. "Every man for himself" says the world. "Look not every man on his own things" says the word. Surely we need give no other illustrations to prove that the precepts of Christ's kingdom are such as go directly "against the grain" of the human heart. They declare in a voice too clear to be mistaken that the kingdom and its subjects are "not of this world."

8. *Its pomp and splendour is not.* We say not it has none, for it has. It is a kingdom of kings, and a nation of priests. Every subject is arrayed in royal robes and the poorest is an "uncrowned monarch." Not Aaron, as he entered the holiest of all, was more magnificently arrayed in priestly robes than is the weakest and most unknown believer. They are a "royal priesthood." But their glory is not a glory that can be seen with human eye. Their splendour is not of this world. You may pass them in the street, and only see the outward signs of poverty and want, and yet they are "heirs apparent" to an eternal throne. By no outward pomp are they to be recognised, and by no loud-sounding titles are they to be distinguished. The kingdom which is of this world may deck its priests in finest lawn and millinery, and call them by the pompous titles of Reverends—Very Reverends—Lord Bishops —and I know not what besides; but by so doing it only condemns itself, and shows what little union it has with the kingdom which is spiritual, not worldly. The kingdom which is from above should be content with the glory that heaven gives it, and not seek to array itself with the importance and grandeur of a world which it professes to renounce.

9. *Its weapons are not.* This fact the verse seems to teach most clearly, for says our Lord "if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." We are not allowed to pioneer the way for our religion by the spear, nor enforce its truths by the sword, as Mahomet did his lies. The rack and stake are not to be our arguments as they were Rome's. The power we have to bring to bear upon the masses is a moral not physical one. The weapons placed in our hands to wield are spiritual, not carnal, and their very spirituality is their power. Would to God that

his subjects would be content to take their weapons from his armoury, and not attempt to fight the Devil with his own. The Gospel in its simplicity is the ram's horn before which the walls of this world's Jericho will fall. We have no time to dwell in detail upon the worldly instrumentality too often employed by the church. But I cannot close this point without expressing my utter disapproval of a mode of warfare that seems now to be becoming wondrously popular. I refer to the giving of semi-secular lectures of a Sabbath evening, under the plea that they reach those a simple gospel sermon will not. I do not believe it to be the case, and were it even proved to be a fact, it touches not the argument. The truth still remains that the weapons destined by God to pull down sin's strongholds are spiritual, not carnal.

And now to close let me say in two or three sentences only, that this subject has a personal bearing upon all present, If Christ's kingdom be a spiritual one, am I a subject of it? Have I ever known that inward spiritual change which alone gives entrance to it? Mere obedience to the outward form and routine of religion will never save. The world can give that. Mere union with a visible portion of the church is no proof that you are a member of *the* church. The kingdom is spiritual, not visible, and requires a spiritual union. Let the prayer of all our hearts be this. "Lord Jesus be Thou our King. Enrol us among thy subjects; and may we all at last be found in that glorious kingdom of thine which is "not of this world."

God grant it may be so, for Jesus sake. Amen.

Scripture read, Ephesians, 2nd c.
Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—397, 46, Part II.—72, Part I.

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THE ROYAL PROCESSION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 7TH, 1869, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"They have seen thy goings, O God; *even* the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary."—PSALM lxviii—24 v.

THIS sublime, comprehensive, and beautiful psalm was without doubt composed in commemoration of the triumphant entry of the ark of the Lord into Jerusalem. For some time it had been detained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, but David the king, hearing that the Lord had blessed the house of Obed-edom whilst the ark was in it, gathered from that fact that the Lord was willing that it should be removed from his house and brought to the hill of Mount Sion. In the second book of Samuel, sixth chapter, you read the account of the joyful and festive occasion, when amid the shoutings of the people, the sound of the trumpet, and with the rejoicing monarch in front, the ark was brought from the house of the private individual and taken triumphantly into Jerusalem. Now the ark was the symbol of God's presence, so when it was carrried up Mount Sion, and through the streets of the city, the people sang not "we have seen the ark of the Lord," but "we have seen *thy* goings, O God." The ark was lost in that which it typified; the type faded into nothingness before the grand antitype which it represented. When the ark came in view of Mount Sion, the place of its fixed residence for the future, and in all probability when they began to ascend it, then is it supposed that the people chanted the 15th verse, which, as I observed in our reading, may be understood in the form of a question, "The hill of God is it as the hill of Bashan? Bashan may boast of its proud eminence and its cloud-cleaving summit, but is that the hill where God will fix his residence?" No, but in the humbler yet more honored mount of Sion.

It is worthy of notice that this verse may be read in the following manner: "They have seen thy marches in procession, O God; even the marches of my God, my King, in the sanctuary." This throws the light upon the subject we desire; namely, the jubilant songs of praise arising from the royal procession of Jehovah before the assembled hosts of Israel.

This evening's subject has been suggested by passing events. Yesterday there was but one theme on every lip—almost one desire in every heart; from early morn you could hear the tread of ten thousand hosts as they wended their way to the great metropolis; there was one subject-matter in the hearts and thoughts of men, and it was this—that there was to be on that day a royal procession through the metropolis of England.

Now we remember that this day there is an assembled host of people; not lining the thoroughfares of our cities, but crowding our chapels and sanctuaries, and many of the theatres. What has brought it together, what is the one desire of the hearts of the vast majority? It is this:—to see the King pass by! And oh, may our God grant that this evening throughout the sanctuaries of the land, whether in those of the metropolis or in the humbler abodes of worship in the country, the shout of the King may be heard in the camp, and may the universal experience of the people be, "we have seen the goings of our God and King in the sanctuary."

We purpose, by God's help, to make the "royal procession" of yesterday illustrative of this evening's subject, and so we shall view our text in three ways. First of all, we will notice *the persons viewing the procession*, "*we* have seen thy goings." Then secondly, we will notice *the procession itself*, "even the *march* of our God, our King." Then lastly, we will notice *the purpose of the procession*; namely, to open a *fresh thoroughfare*.

Let us first notice, THE PEOPLE VIEWING THE PROCESSION. The first thought that occurs to us is this, that in the assembled crowds that yesterday lined our streets, the great majority came on purpose *to see the Queen herself*. If you had over-heard the conversation of the people, it would have been something after this sort. "I wonder whether we shall get a view of Her Majesty, whether from this or that position we can obtain a clear view of royalty itself." And as many flocked from the country who had not seen Her Majesty's face before, the one desire of their heart was that in coming up to the metropolis, they might not only see the pomp and show, but the features and face of Majesty itself; and after the procession I doubt not that in a thousand homes it was said, "we managed to obtain a view of our Queen's face." Now in the assembled hosts of God's people, in the various sanctuaries and tabernacles of the land, what has the majority come for to-night? To see the King *Himself*. Was not the desire of our heart as we came here we would see, not the minister, not the mere outward show of the service, not the pageant, but we would see *Jesus?*" And oh, shall we not go to our homes this evening miserably disappointed, if we cannot say we have seen the KING himself?

But doubtless in the thronging multitude of yesterday, there were many who wished to see the face of the Queen because *they had never seen it before*. And in the sanctuaries to-night, how many are there longing to see the face of the KING, because they have never seen it yet? Doubtless there are some here saying "would that I could get a glimpse of Jesus; that I could see that loving countenance that I have never yet beheld—often has my eye desired to see him—I have heard others speak of his matchless charms—I have heard others declare that he is altogether lovely—would that my eyes could see him!" Friend, as you wended your way here to-night, was the language of your heart, "O that I could see the King to-night, for I have never seen him yet?" The Master is passing in royal procession through this place; now may your eye be directed towards him; and when you leave the sanctuary may the joyful exclamation of your heart be, "I have seen thy goings, O God, my King, in the sanctuary."

There were also many yesterday who had seen Her Majesty before,

but *it was some time back*, and they wanted to see her again. And how many of God's saints there are to-night whose eyes have seen Him, and beheld his lovely countenance. They know what it is to be ravished with the sight; but alas! it is months back, and since then there has been a long and dreary interval of soul-barrenness.

There has been no royal procession before your weary eyes for many a long day. The remembrance of past joys only makes your present gloom the harder to bear. Having once seen the face of your King, you can never forget its beauty, and you yearn yet once again to behold the beloved of your soul. Often have you come to the sanctuary with intensest desire that in it you might behold the marches of your God, and as often have you left without the sight. You have heard the shout of the people. They have told you how gloriously he appeared to them until you envied their bliss, but yet no view have you obtained. And now, once again, you have come with the throng, once more you are found with the waiting multitude. I can see you, brother, standing in yonder doorway. I can mark your anxious eye. I think I can read its language, it is "I would see thee so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." God grant you may have your desire, friend. May the king pass so closely to you, that you shall be enabled to touch his garments. May old days of joy return with tenfold bliss, and may you be able to say to-night what you have so longed to say—"I have seen the royal procession of my God in the sanctuary."

But in yesterday's concourse there were many who did *not* go to see the Queen, but simply to view the pageant. With them it was as much to be seen as see. They went because others went, and because it would help to pass away some idle time. As the procession passed by, they were quite content to hear the sound of the trumpets, to see the outriders, and behold the military; they took the procession as a whole, but had no heart of loyalty for the Queen. We have to come to the conclusion, that in the houses of God to-night, there are many who have only sought them in order to see the pageant; they will return to their homes perfectly satisfied, though their eyes have never caught a glimpse of Christ. They come to hear the preacher—to criticise the singing—to see the congregation. They are perfectly content if there is an attractive service, although the King be wanting in the midst. If there be such present this evening, persons who have come to see the service, but not the Christ—to hear the preacher, but not his God, may the Lord touch their traitorous hearts, and may they from this evening beat in loyalty to Him who is our God and our King.

In yesterday's concourse there *were all grades of society represented.* There were not only dukes and ambassadors from eastern countries, flashing in their jewels; but there were those who had come from the house of business, and the word "care" could be seen written on their countenances. There yonder stands the honest artisan who has with difficulty obtained a holiday; his hands are rough and hard with work, but his manly voice shouts forth a loyalty, as true as any. And there were the poor poverty-stricken ones who had wended their way from the purlieus of Stamford Street to express their gladness. All grades of society were assembled. Blessed be God, it is so to-night; in many of the sanctuaries throughout the land there are the great and the

noble to be found. We have now our godly earls, we have now some of the noblest scions of our aristocracy who feel their highest honour is their union with their Saviour; and *here* we have the artisan, the labourer, the workman, the man of business, the clerk; men who know what it is to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. But think ye that the external appearance of the men in anywise affects their loyalty to their Lord? Not one iota. Beneath a fustian coat, a heart may beat as true and loving as ever beat beneath an ermine, and *vice versa*. The same desire brings both—the same prayer is the prayer of both—the same sight will give equal joy to both—and to the King passing by the loyalty of both is equally welcome. It is one of the glories of our religion, that it makes men in different grades of social life forget their distinctions whilst bending together at their common mercy-seat, or whilst congregated together to see the royal procession of their One King. These minor differences that belong only to earth are lost, forgotten, swamped, drowned in the great ocean of their mutual experience as Christians. The confession of the poor man is the confession of the rich. The praises of the peer are the praises of the pauper. The sight that floods the soul of the godly earl with joy is just the very sight that makes the poor man sing in his poverty.

And now, lastly, on this first division, I would observe, that of those who went to see the procession, *some obtained much better views than others*. They were not all upon the same level. Hundreds were fortunate enough to obtain raised seats and positions of eminence that lifted them far above the surging multitude below, and gave them a clear and uninterrupted view of all that was to be seen. All that could have proved a barrier to their sight was below them, and through their vantage ground they beheld with ease what others failed to do. But there were thousands with a far less happy experience. Despite all their exertions they never succeeded in getting what they wanted—a sight of their Sovereign. They were crushed—crowded—and forced by the sheer weight of numbers, into some wretched position, where they could only see those who were beholding what they desired to. If, for a moment, there was a break in the ranks through which they perceived that the procession was passing close by them, it was sure the next moment to be closed by a multitude of heads. A great amount of trouble to see, and very little result was their day's experience.

So is it with the vast congregations of to-night. Some are obtaining a blessedly clear view of their Lord with but little trouble to themselves, and others with all their striving are only suffering disappointment. Thanks be to God, many of his saints are to-night occupying exalted positions. They are raised in spirit far above all distracting thoughts and circumstances. The cares of the world jostle them not, nor are they crowded in with doubts and unbelief. They can look down with calmness upon a seething world, and sing,

> Oh, this is life! oh, this is joy,
> My God to find Thee so;
> *Thy face to see*, Thy voice to hear,
> And all Thy love to know."

But there are many others who, although almost dying to see the King, find it next to an impossibility to get a glimpse. They

are hemmed in on every side with the cares of business, or perhaps I should rather say, the cares arising from *want* of it. They are well nigh crushed with anxiety, and by the sheer force of unhappy circumstances are being thrust from the front rank of spectators. Do you not think that there are in this Tabernacle to-night men and women struggling bravely with themselves, doing their utmost to cast aside their wandering thoughts, and yet failing to obtain more than a momentary glimpse of Jesus? Yes—and many of them.

II. THE PROCESSION ITSELF. Turning from the spectators to that which they assembled to behold, I would observe first that the procession *passed along an appointed way*. If any one failed to see it, it was not because they were left in ignorance of the route it was to take. Public notices were placed in the most conspicuous positions possible, with the course the royal visitor was to take clearly and definitely stated. As described so was the route taken. For any one to have pleaded ignorance of the same as the cause for not seeing the procession would have been sheer nonsense. Royalty fulfilled its part faithfully. But suppose, if after reading the prescribed order, the man still remained in the backstreets of Stepney? Why he would have no one to thank and no one to grumble at but himself for having seen nothing. He was out of the way, and he must pay the penalty for being so. All he had to do was to place himself in one of the appointed thoroughfares, and that one thing he never did. I have no pity for him in his disappointment; he richly deserves it.

Friends, our King has marked out the road along which He passes, and if we do not see Him it is because we have not gone into the right way. If we are backsliders in heart, and instead of standing in the highway of God, are found even now in the slums of sin, don't let us wonder if we see not anything. Too often are we like unhappy Thomas, conspicuous by our absence when King Jesus visits his people. We wonder how it is we have not the same joys as others, nor obtain the same gladdening sight of our Lord, forgetting that it would be a wonder if we did, considering they are in the way, and we out of it. The backslider is his own punishment, and scourges himself by his own folly.

But as our King passes along an appointed route, it is but fair you should ask the question, "what *is* that route?" I reply first the royal procession is announced in the language of our text to pass through the *sanctuary*. The assembled hosts of his people to-night have ground to expect a view of their sovereign, for they are in the high road. They are found in the place where he loves to pass by.

Let some would-be-extra-spiritual-persons sneer if they like at the great gatherings of the sanctuary, and dub them "all of man," we have, however, found by experience that there are views of the King obtained in them that are obtained nowhere else.

But if the King were only to be seen in the sanctuary, it would go hard with those on beds of sickness, and I know not what the dying would do; so in the King's route I find marked out—the sick room—the chamber of death—the abode of suffering, and the home of sorrow. If you went into many a sick room this evening round about here, and asked the dying Christian "Where does the King pass by?" He would tell you, "I am even now beholding him." Go into the abode of grief—

go there where all are weeping, where the tokens of bereavement are around you; ask the broken-hearted mourners where is the King? and they will say, "He comes into the abode of sorrow." Yes, he passes by where'er he is sought aright, but I think *especially* at His table. There is the place to get a glimpse of Him; it is there we expect to be raised above the crowd, beyond the cares of life. It is when we sit around the table of our Lord, with the emblems of his dying love before us that we expect to see the King in his beauty, because he always lingers there.

BUT WHAT DID THE JOY OF THE PROCESSION CONSIST OF? It was a procession of royalty. Our widowed queen, who for many years had been hidden from the eyes of her subjects, was about to appear again, and that constituted the joy of the procession. It was the queen appearing *as queen*. And what, beloved, will constitute the chief joy of our hearts to-night. Surely our King appearing as King, in his royalty. Christ has already made some royal processions, but they were *incognito*. Let me explain what I mean. It was over eighteen hundred years back that infinite mercy said, "I will pass through the world." But before our King came to this earth, He removed the diadem from off his brow, He unbound the girdle from his waist, and loosed the sandals from his feet; He bade his courtiers remain behind, and as a carpenter's son He made his entry in this world. True, once He did make a triumphal entry into the capital, but then it was remarkable for its simplicity. It was made meek and lowly, sitting on the foal of an ass. Our King has, moreover, had (O, wondrous fact) *a royal procession of shame*, in which, instead of being greeted with jubilant shouts, he was only hailed with roars of execration, and pelted with bitterest sarcasms. Let us for a few moments take our position and view this marvellous sight. Where shall we stand? Well, first in a place called Gethsemane. 'Tis night, and all is wrapt in gloom; Hark! hark! I hear his footsteps. Do you see him as he walks with tottering steps? Speak not, but let us see the end. He falls upon his knees—now upon his face—he groans and cries with tears—a blood sweat stands thick upon him, then drops upon the ground and dyes it red. And now the rabble have found him out, and with many a jeer and blow they drag him to a mock tribunal. From Pilate's hall the procession of shame wends its way to Herod's court then back again. They tie him to the whipping post, his sacred shoulders are bared, but again clothed with a crimson mantle, as the blood fast flows before the furious blows of the Roman scourge. From thence shame's pageant slowly passes on to Calvary. The road is lined with thousands of spectators, but there was no eye to pity. "Worthy of a felon's death" is the shout that greets him. In no carriage of state, but staggering with faintness and loss of blood, our King walks by, whilst upon his bleeding shoulders he bears the rugged cross. Do you see Him—"the hind of the morning," hounded on by the dogs of hell? Do you hear their barking and baying? Do you mark how they "worry" him, even in his dying moments? Canst thou hear that ringing death shriek which he utters when his heart breaks? Truly, we have seen a royal procession unto death.

Time fails us, or we should like to say how we have seen our God's goings in *his church*. Our King has sometimes made

a royal procession by the outpouring of his Spirit. He made one in the sixteenth century, when the ark of the Lord was carried forward by such men of God as Luther and Calvin. A glorious procession was that. Then did the earth shake and the mountains flow down at his presence. Before the thunder of that march the papal throne tottered, and swarms of hooded priests like night owls disturbed with a glaring light flew hither and thither, screeching in wild dismay. Our King made one of his royal marches through the land of brown heather and rugged woods, when from end to end of the land the ark was borne upon the stalwart shoulders of the lion-hearted Knox. Many and many a time has heavenly royalty swept through this land of ours with such men for outriders as a Wycliffe, Latimer, Wesley, or a Whitfield; and even in this our day there are glorious indications that our King is "on the march." But this brings us to the last point on this division of our subject. We have yet to behold the procession of *supreme* royalty—royalty decked in all its magnificence. This will take place when our Lord comes the second time without sin unto salvation. Let me for a moment sketch the position, the present position of the church. For ages it has been anxiously expecting the return of its glorious Lord. Far back in the dim distance, yet burning like a beacon light stands the promise, "I will come again."

For centuries has the church sent back the echo "Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus." Long has it listened, and it does so still for the rumble of his chariot wheels. Sometimes, almost wearied with the long suspense, and sick with hope deferred, the cry goes up from the waiting host, "O Lord, how long?"

But, beloved, the day draws near apace when the "desire of all nations" shall come. Sometimes we think we can discern with the eye of faith the eastern horizon blushing rosy with the rising sun. Sometimes the ear of faith thinks it can catch the sound of preparation for the march. Expectation is at the height, and the general feeling is "it can't be long." This one fact is certain, every moment brings it nearer. Every chiming hour is one hour less of waiting. The hour *must* at last strike when throwing wide the doors of heaven, our King shall come with ten thousand of his saints attending. Then, amid the waves of melody that roll throughout the universe shall this shout be heard from the jubilant multitude, "we have seen thy marches of procession, O God; even the marches of our God and King in the sanctuary."

And now in conclusion let us notice THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROCESSION. For what intent was the royal visit of yesterday made? What brought our Sovereign again before her people? The answer is quickly given. *To open a new thoroughfare.* Surely in this respect the pageant of yesterday may serve as an illustration of our subject. For what did our Lord appear? What mighty motive brought him from the palaces of heaven to mingle with earth's mean inhabitants? Wherefore that marvellous procession of shame and ignominy, terminating in the bloody tragedy of Calvary? I answer, he came to open wide a thoroughfare to Heaven. He came first of all not only to open but to *be* the road *to the Father.* The old road called *innocence* was blocked up by Adam's fall, and that so effectually that no one has ever been able to travel by it since. Men then had to go round by a wondrously circuitous route. They had to go by the way of the sin-offering, the

burnt-offering, the peace-offering, and the brazen altar. There was no direct road revealed, but an endless road of sacrifice and symbol. Christ came to put away for ever this way that only wearied, and show poor fallen man a way, as direct as it was wide, and as free from obstructions as the former was full. The old way may now be abandoned for the new is declared open. "Priest of God, put out that altar fire! Unbind the victim! Sheath the knife! The true Lamb of God has come. The substance of all the types stands now in your midst. The new and living way has already been opened by Calvary's royal procession. Christ has, moreover, opened a new way *to the mercy-seat.* The old road by earthly priests and high priests is done away with. We now need no Aaronic priest, with purple robe and flashing breastplate to appear in some "Holy" on earth for us. Our great high priest is in the heavens, even Jesus, and there

"The names of all his saints he bears
Deep graven on his heart."

"Out" upon an earthly priesthood, and upon all men who suffer the name to be applied to their vocation. It is a miserable attempt to keep open an old way that God has emphatically declared "closed." The road to the mercy-seat is open and free to all, and *as* free to all as to one.

Our King has also opened *a high road to Heaven itself.* So straight and direct is this road that the moment we place by faith our feet upon one end of it, we can behold the gates of pearl at the other. True, between us and the city of the New Jerusalem, there rolls the river of death, but over that there has been flung a bridge, so that the ransomed of the Lord pass over dry-shod. Do you still suggest there remains the dark grave; I answer the thoroughfare passes *through* that also. It is no dark vault in which the road terminates, but only a shadowy tunnel, in the passage through which the light at the further end can be discerned. Our King has marched in royal procession before us here, and solemnly declares the way to be "opened." And now, lastly, may we this evening prove, that in our experience the King has opened *a fresh thoroughfare of communion.* Many of us came here, hoping with all our hearts that we might enjoy some fellowship with him, yet hardly daring to expect it. It seemed to us as if there were a thousand obstacles in the road, all forbidding the very idea. Home cares—business troubles—life's anxieties—earth's disappointments—all these, and hundreds of things besides, occupied the heart, and threatened to hold it in possession. We were pressed in the crowd of our "multitude of thoughts," and saw no way of deliverance. But how is it now? Thank God, that doubtless with many of us, there has been a blessed change. Our King has passed by, and before his march barriers have been removed. We have been lifted up out of the press—we have seen our King in his beauty, and are now prepared to sit around his table, in the full expectation of deep and intimate fellowship, for between him and our souls a fresh highway of communion has been royally thrown open.

God grant that this may be experience of all present for Jesus sake Amen.

Scripture Read, Psalm lxviii—24th v.
Hymns sung from "Our own Hymn Book."—104, 418, 416.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

MY BANNER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 5TH, 1869, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah Nissi." —EXODUS xvii.—15.

MURMURING is sure to lead to trouble, and rightly so. They who will murmur about nothing must not be surprised if God gives them some trial worthy of being talked about. The children of Israel had found fault with Moses without cause, and so, consequently, the Lord visits their sin with the rod. They had murmured against the Lord, and against His servant, concerning the scarcity of water. "Wherefore is this" they demanded of Moses, that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt to kill us, and our children, and our cattle with thirst." So hot did their anger wax, and so unbridled was their wrath, that Moses feared even for his life, and in his cry to his God declares "they be almost ready to stone me." The Lord gave the ungrateful rebels drink, for at the touch of the wonder-working rod, the Rock of Horeb poured forth its streams in the desert; but Israel's sin shall have its condemning monument in the very name of the place, for it was called Meribah, or 'chiding.' But no sooner were their wants supplied than at once Amalek came upon them. Wherever there is a Meribah, there is sure to be a Rephidim close by. Long did the battle last, sore was the fight; from morning until the going down of the sun might be heard the clash of steel and the shouts of those engaged in the combat. The battle surged continuously from one side of the valley to the other. Now there is a shout from the ranks of Amalek, "they fly, they fly!" and anon I see Israel make a fresh attack, and with an impetuous rush that carries everything before it, they turn the tide of battle, and hew their way to victory. The enemy stagger; their courage fails; and for a moment panic seizes all the ranks. They make one more desperate attempt, and with the energy of despair again they close their columns and show a bristling front. But all in vain; Israel like an overwhelming flood bursts full upon them, and with the shout "The Lord of Hosts is with us," sweeps on to final conquest. It was no mere defeat—it was an entire rout.

Why was glorious victory thus secured to Israel's side? The answer is easily given. The fight was the Lord's and not man's. The triumph came from the arm of Jehovah, not from the weapons

of His people; and consequently Moses did right when he erected an altar, and called the name of it 'Jehovah Nissi;' which is, being interpreted, 'the Lord my Banner.' The Lord looked down upon the conflicting armies, but not as an unmoved and uninterested spectator. The battle was the Lord's, and though unseen, He occupied the field. On Amalek He frowned, and that frown withered their strength and froze their prowess. On Israel did His smile like a golden sunbeam rest; and that smile nerved their arms with tenfold might and rendered them invincible. "Ah, Amalek, thou hast entered upon a hopeless encounter; no feeble man of dust has taken the field against thee; but arrayed before thee is the "God of battles." The Lord who is a "man of war," has come with thunder clothed to meet thee, and not merely do the stars fight against thee (as with Sisera) but He who upholds them in their courses. Where God wars there can be no question about the victory, and where his banner leads there can be no defeat.

But let us now forget the ensanguined armies and concentrate our thoughts upon the up-reared altar and the title given, "Jehovah Nissi." Surely, beloved, we have here in richest metaphor our Lord Jehovah Jesus. Who is a Banner save He? And of whom but He can the exulting saint exclaim "Jehovah Nissi." We will look upon this subject in several aspects, and try and discover in what respects our Master is the Banner. Our divisions shall be as follows—first, *the banner was always the centre of attraction*; next, Christ as a banner is *the banner of all Christendom*. Christ as a banner is *a banner unfurled*. As a banner He is the subject of *continual attack*. As a banner He gives *the signal for 'March;'* and He is a banner that *always leads to certain victory*.

I. THE BANNER WAS THE CENTRE OF ATTRACTION. It was usually planted upon some hill top or eminence where, from far and wide, it might be seen. From all quarters did the hosts march forward, converging to that spot, and around the unfurled banner did they pitch their great encampment. Can we not in this see a lively picture of our Lord, and the attractive power of Him who said, "And I if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me."

Does not this set forth Him concerning whom the dying patriarch said (whilst the film of death was fast glazing his eye) "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Yes, it is a blessed truth that whenever and wherever Christ is lifted up, then and there is his power to attract made plain.

The elect of God, drawn by a power they have no ability or will to resist, take their places beneath its far-spreading folds. As we endeavoured to show you this morning whilst preaching from Acts xviii, 10, the uplifting of Christ is God's chosen means to draw unto Himself his hidden people. It is a divine loadstone that draws with irresistible force, hearts of steel. So mighty is its magnetic power that *it attracts those on whom all other means have failed*. Let us for a moment turn to the book of our remembrance and peruse its pages, and we shall find this fact written in them. Long had we heard the loving tale of Christ's humiliation; we had seen Him as the weary traveller, and as the weeping

mourner, and yet our hearts remained untouched. We had often been compelled to take our stand before Mount Sinai, but though its lightnings flashed into our very eyes, and its thunders crashed right over head, our heart remained like adamant—yea, pride seemed more rampant in that dread storm than ever—we felt we might be broken but we resolved we would never bend.

There have been moments when Hell argued with us, and all its sentences were written in glowing flame; moments when perdition forced itself upon our thoughts, and made us dread the death that never dies. But though our knees shook with fright, our hearts remained unmelted. Sinai and Hell both failed. So also did Heaven, for though we read of its glories, and heard tell of its joys, and sometimes had a languid desire at last to find our way thither, we still remained unattracted, and revelled in the world. But when a bleeding Saviour hanging on a tree met our sight, then not only were our eyes rivetted, but an unseen hand touched every heartstring. We looked—and looked—and looked again—and felt that as we looked we were being drawn with silken cords nearer, yet nearer still, until we found ourselves as penitents at his feet, and learnt that

> "His mercy was more than a match for our heart,
> Which wondered to feel its own hardness depart."

Beautifully has old John Newton described this sweet experience as his own:—

> "In evil long I took delight,
> Unawed by shame or fear;
> Till a new object struck my sight,
> And stopp'd my wild career.
>
> I saw one hanging on a tree,
> In agonies and blood,
> Who fixed His languid eyes on me,
> As near the cross I stood.
>
> Sure never till my latest breath,
> Can I forget that look:
> It seemed to charge me with His death,
> Though not a word He spoke.
>
> A second look He gave, which said
> I freely all forgive;
> This blood is for thy ransom paid,
> I die, that thou may'st live."

Surely there are hundreds here this evening who are living witnesses to the truthfulness of what we are saying. And is it any marvel or wonder that an uplifted Christ has this power? I answer 'No,' for on this unfurled banner can be read an answer to every fear, a supply for every need. The trembling conscience-stricken sinner, whose one desire is to obtain "peace," looks up with anxious eye, and reads upon the waving banner, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have *peace* with God." The poor, weary, worn-out sinner, whose one thought is "rest," lifts up his eyes and reads, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The friendless and forlorn wanderer, nigh broken-hearted, looks up to this banner, and sees amid its ample folds, emblazoned as in golden letters, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." The soul,

quivering like an aspen leaf through fear and dread of coming days reads, "Surely I will be with thee." The sinner nearly in despair, through an overwhelming sense of his own defilement, reads written in the very centre of the banner as its chiefest scroll, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow." "Ah," saith he, "that just suits me," and he takes his stand with the ever-increasing multitude. Thus is the cross of Jesus our glorious banner; the centre of attraction to weary, sin-sick souls. God grant that it may be so this evening, and out of this thronging multitude may an uplifted Saviour draw many.

II. CHRIST AS OUR BANNER IS THE BANNER OF ALL CHRISTENDOM. On this part of our subject I desire to speak with the greatest plainness, as I am confident that here many mistakes are made. "Jehovah Nissi" is no mere party flag or regimental colour, but the royal ensign of a royal host. No one sect can claim it as its own to the exclusion of others. It belongs equally to all who have been called to the "good fight," no matter to what portion of the militant host they may belong. Think not for a moment I would advocate the surrender of our party colours, or plead for the extinction of denominations. Such a thing is an impossibility, and even if it *could* be accomplished, I should be sorry to see it done. An army is none the worse, but all the better for being made up of separate companies; and it is no dishonour to a soldier if he loves his own regiment the most, and thinks it the best. A union at the sacrifice of the smallest truth is not to be desired or prayed for. But let us beware lest in flaunting our distinctive banner we hide from the eyes of any the royal ensign—lest we become so absorbed in the success of our own party that we grow indifferent as to the progress of the entire host. "*Victory all along the line*" must be our prayer and shout, and nothing else allowed to satisfy us. We all look to the upraised standard and together say "my Banner." The Lord grant that there may be speedily a more general recognition of *this* oneness amongst His people. A nearness to each other through a universal nearness to Christ. Let our party flags be seen by all means; but grouped around Jehovah Nissi, not planted in its place. It is narrated that during the times of the Crusade, when the lion-hearted Richard I of England, the Emperor of Austria, and the King of France were jointly waging war against the heroic heathen Saladin, a jealousy sprang up in the camp between England and Austria, and one morning the British banner was found lying in the dust on St. George's Mount, and the standard of Austria occupying its place. No sooner did impetuous Richard hear of the insult offered to the royal ensign than he strode forth alone, and before the assembled hosts hurled Austria's ensign to the ground, and caused the British Lion once more to take pre-eminence, remarking, "Your banners may be planted around mine, but never take its place." So let it be with us, beloved. Upon the St. George's Mount of our heart and life let the Lion of Judah, Jehovah Nissi, alone have the place of honor.

III. OUR BANNER IS A BANNER UNFURLED. Jehovah Nissi is no banner whose folds hang idly drooping in the quiet security of some castle, a mere relic of the past, to be gazed on as a curiosity, but never

again planted on the battlements. It is this evening as it has ever been, a banner exalted and unfurled. When first man fell, and innocence departed, then was Jehovah Nissi raised in Eden's garden. True, it was but very partially unfurled, and its rich folds hung in drooping wreaths, but still our fallen parents read the promise it was reared to tell, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Time rolled on, and the days of continual sacrifice approached; but through the incensed smoke that rose from off the brazen altar could be dimly seen yet more unfurled, "Jehovah Nissi." And now the prophets grasp it, and shake out yet more its folds, and in the hands of silver-tongued Isaiah it spread so wide that an astonished world read, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

After the prophets, our Lord Himself planted the banner high on Calvary's cross, and from that eminence it streamed in all its beauties whilst men and angels wondered. From that time right down to the present moment there have never been wanting hands to lift it high. By earnest ministers—by martyr missionaries—by devoted teachers in our Sabbath Schools—by laborious tract distributors, has the banner been uplifted. How joyous is the thought, that before the eyes of assembled millions is this banner this evening being raised. Who can tell in how many sanctuaries—in how many mission rooms in the dark places of the city—by how many dying beds are faithful standard-bearers to be found, who

> "Point to his redeeming blood,
> And cry, "Behold the way to God."

IV. CHRIST AS A BANNER IS THE SUBJECT OF CONTINUAL ATTACK. An eminent German writer has said, "No wonder that it is so, for the enemy knows that for a host to lose its banner is not only a great loss, but a great disgrace, and almost worse than a defeat."

If this banner *can* be wrested from the hands that hold it, rest assured no artifice will be untried, no power left unemployed. "Christ crucified," stirs up all the animosity of the foe, and awakens his fear; for well he knows that while alone this is the preacher's theme, there is but little hope for *him*. He has no objection to Christ as man, or Christ as a model teacher; but Christ a divine substitute—Christ the Son of God, on Calvary's tree—Christ, the sinner's only hope—is an uplifted banner that must be trampled in the dust, if it can by any means be accomplished. To this end he tries to dazzle the eyes of God's host, by the flashy, flimsy, tawdry rags of Ritualism and bastard Popery, and seeks to induce it to accept them in exchange for Jehovah Nissi. Rally round the banner, friends, and treat with indignant scorn so base and insulting an exchange. Exclaim with old Dr. Watts—

> "Should all the forms that men devise
> Assault my faith with treacherous art,
> I'd call them vanity and lies,
> And bind the gospel to my heart."

The next point (and it is one I am desirous of forcing home with all my power) is this,

V. "JEHOVAH NISSI" IS A BANNER THAT GIVES THE SIGNAL FOR "MARCH." There is, I believe, a semi-infidel society now in existence which has had the astounding impudence to call itself "The Church of Progress." The name which it has pilfered belongs rightly to the church purchased with a Saviour's blood. Inscribed upon its banner is "Onward," and its war-cry for ages has been "Forward."

Jehovah Nissi leads to battle. It summons to the glorious war of conquering the world for Christ. It proclaims a grand crusade against the strong-holds, sin and darkness. The very mention of its name recalls to memory deeds of heroic daring and life-long struggle. What noble hands have grasped it, and planted it through seas of blood upon the frowning battlements of the foe! What heroes have died beneath its folds! Let the history of the past inspire us. God has never been without His standard bearers, and never will. The dying hands of one have never relaxed their hold before others have grasped the tottering banner, and carried it to further victory. Stephen, the first martyr, falls amid the frenzied cries of execration of an enraged mob, but the banner he bore so well only falls into the hands of a Philip, who unfurls it with marvellous effect amid the superstitious region of Samaria. It came into the hands of Paul, who, in a few short years, planted it triumphantly in Diana-worshipping Ephesus—refined but idolatrous Athens—and grossly licentious Corinth, with its infamous temple of Venus. Would to God there was more in our day of his fiery ambition to see cities and countries won to Christ—"a dying to see men converted."

There has been lately a growing conviction in the minds of many that God's church has in some measure been making a re rograde movement, and losing its passion for souls. This conviction has given birth to a letter by our dear friend and brother Mr. Spurgeon, addressed to all the ministers who were once students in his college. Let me read you just a passage or two from it.

"Being debarred from serving the Lord by my own public ministry, it has been laid upon my heart to endeavour to stir up my brother ministers to use increased diligence while they are permitted the great pleasure and privilege of preaching the word. I pray that every word I write may be approved of God, and may be by the Holy Ghost rendered serviceable to you.

"*It has struck me painfully that for some little time a somewhat listless spirit has fallen upon many of the church, and perhaps the ministers.* A short time ago we heard more of special services, revival meetings, and aggressive efforts upon the world; perhaps these may still be in full and vigorous operation among your people, but in many places it is not so; the pace of holy work has slackened, and the church is falling back into that dreary routine which is easily reached, but deadly in its consequences. Meanwhile our direst enemies, the Romanising Anglicans, have taken up the weapons which we have laid aside, and are making most ostentatious, and it is to be feared most successful, use of them. They are evidently wise in their generation, for they not only borrow from Rome, but they copy from us. Is this intended by our Lord to irritate us to renewed activity? Does he thus chide us by causing us to see how others burn with zeal, and in their ardour compass sea and land to make proselytes? Does he not say to us, 'Behold how these men are quick to adopt all methods; are ye, my servants, dull of understanding?'"

God grant, dear friends, that these words may not fall as sparks in a pond, but rather on tinder, and may they now kindle a flame in

our hearts which shall burn, and burn, and burn until we are in one entire glow or rather white heat for the dying masses that surround us. Jehovah Nissi was never placed in our hands for us to be calmly indifferent; but to inspire us with an absorbing ambition for its increase of glory. There are dark places in the great East-end of London that need the bright shining of the gospel—habitations of ignorance and vice which by their very wretchedness cry aloud for the "help of the Lord against the mighty." One has but to take a walk along the squalid streets and endless courts that surround this sanctuary to be convinced of the truth of what I state. He must have a heart that is something less than human who can make such a tour of inspection, and yet return to his home with a soul anything but saddened and sickened with the sights he has been obliged to witness. Often are we forced with desponding spirit to exclaim, "Great God, how small a portion of the city after all the efforts that have been put forth dwells beneath the shadow of the glorious banner." "Up," christians, "Up." Ye members of this Church, "arise," and see if ye cannot by some means help to stem the flowing, filthy stream of sin that pours past your very doors, and lighten the murky gloom that surrounds with deathly blackness the small Goshen where you dwell. God forbid that any of us should be slumbering whilst souls are being damned. By that solemn hour of death, when the past, with its opportunities, used and abused, will rise to view, and by the awful Day of Judgment when stewardships shall have to be accounted for, I beseech you, by earnest pleadings with your God, and ceaseless efforts for the souls of men, to plant the Banner in some fresh hearts and neighbourhoods. My greatest ambition and most earnest prayer is, to see a noble crusade made by this Church against the principalities and powers, and strongholds of sin that surround us. Fain would I (Oh that I had but power) preach *such* a crusade, and inflame your hearts and mine to hurl themselves into the battle. That was a wonderful spectacle that an assembled multitude beheld, when somewhere about seven hundred years ago the mighty monk, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, preached the second great crusade. I think I see him as he stands upon the hill overlooking the quiet plain of Vezelai. The wondrous gathering that has congregated from far and wide surrounds him in awe-struck expectation. Amongst them are the King and Queen of France, and to be numbered only by the thousands, a multitude of steel-clad knights and warriors. A death-like stillness pervades the host as Bernard begins to speak. From those lips flew words that fell amidst the vast throng like sparks on stubble. A very conflagration of wild, enthusiastic ardour was the result. From every quarter arose the cry, "Crosses, Crosses, Crosses." On every hand he flung them, and at last to satisfy the clamourous demand he tore to shreds his monkish cowl. Thus was the great but disastrous crusade proclaimed. Beloved, we would this evening,—and we wish we had a St. Bernard's power to do it,—proclaim a fresh crusade. One, not to deliver a sepulchre from sacrilegious hands, but immortal souls from hell. Inspired with the desire, do you cry, "Banners! Banners! Banners!" We give you them to-night. In every hand we place one bearing this device, "Jehovah Nissi." Wave it, child of God—wave it while you can raise an arm—and if you fall upon the

field, let its folds be your martial cloak around you, whilst your hand still clutches it in the death-grasp.

And now, lastly, let us for a minute or two dwell upon this blessed truth that

VI. JEHOVAH NISSI ALWAYS LEADS TO CERTAIN VICTORY. This is more than can be said of earth's banners. 'Tis not many years since one of the mightiest armies imperial power could command, marched eastward with the eagle banner of France, led by one whose very name had always seemed a guarantee of victory. With confidence and thoughts of spoil they marched from town to town. Did they not follow the banner that had waved triumphantly over a thousand bloody fields? Was not "the General" at their head? Success was certain. View that same army in its return from Moscow. See it after it has met upon the field a Russian winter. Who can recognise in those straggling groups, leaving the dying and the dead behind them at every step, the once gallant army, that swept on with martial steps in all the pomp and pageantry of war. So much for confidence in the banner of an empire. But, child of God, Jehovah Nissi shall lead to no such bitter disappointment and disaster. Its presence in the camp *is* victory itself. Does it lead you into the thick of storm and tempest? It will be your protection. Does it guide you into darkness? It will throw a light upon the field. Does it pioneer you into fierce temptation? It will be your power to resist. Does it lead you, as it eventually must, to the cold waters of death? The moment your feet touch the waters they shall roll back as before the ark of old, and your passage shall be made dry-shod. In the middle of the channel you shall sing, "O death, where is now thy sting? O grave, where is now thy victory?" Glorious! Glorious Banner!! And thrice happy people who can call it theirs.

Ere we close, I want sinner to have a word with you. You cannot say this text with truth. Far otherwise. Floating over *you* is another banner altogether, its folds, black as perdition, droop heavily over head like some black awful pall. Written in its very centre is one word. Its lurid light reveals it. It is HELL. O sinner, sinner, you must be either under one banner or the other. God help you now to escape from your direful doom and flee with hasty steps to Jesus. Then shall you be able to look up into his face beaming with forgiving love, and say, "Jehovah Nissi," the Lord, *my* Banner. God grant it may be so with all, for Jesus' sake—Amen.

Scripture read, Psalm 118.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—192, 387, 674.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SWEET ECHO.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 2ND, 1870, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"*When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee; Thy face, Lord, will I seek."—PSALM XXVII—8.

I feel dear friends that I have this morning to perform one of the most difficult tasks possible; namely, to preach when there is no preaching power in one. I am at the present moment in intense pain, which, though chiefly concentrated in the head, seems to dart along every nerve of the body. It is with some degree of difficulty that I can even distinguish your faces as everything is at present in a wild whirl around me. What few thoughts I had collected together upon this lovely text, have broken away from my grasp, and like wild horses on a plain, seem to challenge capture. I therefore cast myself upon your generous sympathy and indulgence, and trust you will accept the words spoken in weakness and the thoughts gathered together with difficulty in the same spirit that led our Lord to make his kindly allowance for the unwatchful disciples, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Let us then to the work.

One of the sweetest marvels of nature is "the echo," and one that to the soul touched in any degree with poetic fire, must give birth to a thousand thoughts and reveries. An echo! It is nature's poetry, that charms and captivates the mind, yet almost fills with fear. Well do I remember standing some years back upon a lone mountain-side—on every hand were giant peaks that towered up above, and seemed to frown on all beneath. Some were awful in their barrenness—their swelling lines unbroken by shrub or bush or tree—whilst others had their sloping sides mantled with a thousand pines. I was alone, and the solitude oppressed me—in vain did I listen for sound of human footstep, singing bird, or bleating sheep. The silence was so intense I thought I *heard* it. It seemed as if those monarch mountains had awed everything into the stillness of death. I tried to think of the ages they had reared their bald heads and darkening brows in one perpetual silence—save when the storm-cloud wreathed their shoulders and the thunder rolled amidst their crags—the thought oppressed me more than ever. For almost countless centuries had these grand monuments of Divine Omnipotence cast their dark shadows upon the narrow rocky ravine that lay below. I felt as if the very silence would crush me, and under an irresistible impulse, rising from a fallen boulder on which

I had been resting, I gave a shout. There was a moment's pause, and then those silent mountains found tongue. From side to side a very artillery was maintained. Echo awoke echo, and a second only gave birth to a third. The very pine trees seemed to nod their heads as they flung "the echo back again." The change was complete. I stood as one who had awoke a spirit he had no power to restrain. I felt as if my very presence there was an intrusion, and that the sleeping giants who had been awoke by my call, were challenging my right to their domains. From that moment to the present I have held the echo to be one of the most glorious phenomena of nature. But there is another echo, ungiven by nature, and unheard in mountain glen, which far more delights my soul—I mean the echo of the heart. The soul's response to the call of God—the grateful loving echo which the renewed heart gives to the call of its Lord. Far superior is the echo of grace to that of nature, for whilst the latter but *repeats* the words, the former *answers* hem.

Such an echo have we in this morning's text. The soul of the sweet singer of Israel had been dwelling in silence; when all at once the solitude is broken by a voice from heaven. "Seek ye my face," rings into every nook and cleft of the psalmist's heart, and awakes his sleeping powers. There is but a moment's pause, and the echo is given back in tones that have reached right down the ages to the present time, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." I think you will now have caught the thought we desire this morning to meditate upon, and may our Lord grant that whilst together musing upon it, there may be heard within the quiet of our breasts the still small voice of the Spirit calling us to seek a Father's face, and may there from this morning's gathering resound a thousand echoes gathering volume as they roll.

Perhaps some may be led to ask, 'Why has this text been selected for a New Year's morning subject? Is there anything in it peculiarly suited to the occasion?' Yes, I think there is, and it is this. Throughout the year God will be calling us all by different voices to seek his face, every hour will the call be heard, and the happiness of the year will depend upon the echo that the heart gives back. He who in answer to every call, whether by mercy or trial, seeks at once his Father's face, will have even in trouble a happy year; whilst he whose heart remains in sullen silence and heeds no calls of mercy, will, amid a year of plenty, dwell in gloom.

The subject divides itself naturally into two divisions, namely, first, *The Call*, secondly, *The Echo*.

First then, THE CALL. It is God's reminder to a soul absorbed in the business, care, and pleasures of this life, to seek amidst them all his face and favour. And here let us make a frank confession, which, unless I am greatly mistaken, will be the confession of every heart that knows anything of itself. '*It is a call that we often find difficult to hear.*' The illustration I employed in the introduction of the sermon when describing the text as an echo, fails altogether to describe the surroundings of the saint; there is to him no still quiet that renders the hearing of the faintest sound a certainty, but on the contrary a very Babel of confused noises dins his ears. A thousand voices clamour for his

attention, and it is often only by the straining of the ear that the still voice calling "upward" can be distinguished. Business man present, do you not find it to be so? Has not the whirr of commerce often deafened you to everything else, and has not its roar drowned all softer but sweeter sounds? You have struggled to be "in the Spirit" during your hours of toil, but how hard a work you have found it. You have sighed to hear the voice that would raise you far above the maddening whirl of commercial life, but the sigh was one of disappointment, for the hoarse shouts of suicidal competition alone poured upon the ear. You were like a man in a vast machinery room, surrounded by a thousand revolving wheels and creaking straps, trying in vain to catch the words he knew his bosom friend was speaking. It is one thing to hear the voice in the sanctuary—though that is not always easy—and another to hear it on the mart—in the exchange—behind the counter—at the desk—or in the docks. The world of business is no lone mountain side on which the faintest sound that floats upon the breeze not only may but must be heard. It is the battle-field of life, on which to multitudes, rages a life-long fight with many a confused noise. It is one thing to be "calm in the closet's solitude," but it is quite another to be "calm in the bustling street."

Man of business, we recognise the difficulties of your position, and our sympathy is yours. But remember that the acknowledgment of the difficulty to hear the voice *in no wise says it is impossible.* Far from it. The ear rightly attuned will hear it clear as a silver bell ringing out its note above the surrounding Babel. Give not way to despair and let not your heart lose hope. Although difficult, it is possible, even in and over the clamour of business life to hear the call and give the echo. But beside the noise of business life, there is that of many cares. This difficulty will be understood by many to whom the previous was unknown. All are not called to business, but all are called to care. The speaker confesses to often finding it hard to distinguish the voice of Heaven amid the many conflicting calls of care. He has found it is possible to be so engaged, even in the work of the Lord and His church, as to become over-absorbed, and permit its cares to break into the quiet of the soul. There are others also here this morning who find it as difficult as any, at times to hear this call. I refer to the *Mothers.* Do not you find, dear friends, that domestic cares and duties often perplex and harass and so occupy your time that you feel as if it were next door to an impossibility for you to have the quiet of soul necessary to hear the voice of your Father inviting you to seek his face. "Yes," I think I hear you say, "it is too true; the little world of my own home distracts me so with its many calls that I often fail to hear the call and give the echo." In a word, beloved, every position and station of life has its difficulties, and the greatest difficulty in this noisy, busy, feverish world, is to be always listening to the voice, "seek ye my face.

But alas, there are some who have *never heard it yet.* How sad the thought that in this Sabbath morning's congregation there are men and women whose hearts have never heard what to so many of us is sweeter melody than all earth's music. Ah, friend, you know not what

you lose. Your mercies, received with scarce a thought of gratitude, would have a tenfold greater sweetness were you to see them as calls from a Father to seek his face. Your trials, which now seem to you like crushing loads, and under which you repine and fret, would lose half their weight and bitterness, could you but read them as so many invites to turn from earth, and seek a closer intimacy with God.

Poor soul, deafened to all heavenly music by the noise and strife of life, my heart yearns over you, and my deepest thought concerning you is "would that this morning the still small voice might find its way within your breast, and awaken new and as yet unheard echoes."

This call is one, moreover, that is heard by God's saints *in different degrees.* All spiritual hearing is not equally acute. There are some who sit and sing

"Oh, this is life! Oh, this is joy,
My God, to find Thee so;
Thy face to see, *Thy voice to hear,*
And all thy love to know."

whilst others by their side can distinguish nothing but the roar of an outside world. There are some naturally calm and contemplative spirits that "dwell with Mary at the Master's feet," and who seem enabled to detect in every providence a call to a higher life; whilst there are others just as anxious to hear their shepherd's voice, and yet are ever troubled about much service, and the very clatter of whose preparations fills their ear to the exclusion of their Saviour's word. That is the most spiritual mind that is the most prepared to hear at all times the sweet call of the text. And he is the most spiritually-minded Christian present who most hears and sees in all and everything an invite to a closer fellowship.

Let us now look at a few different instrumentalities by which our Lord calls us to seek His face.

1. *He calls us by His word.* Let us turn to memory, and see if we have not often found it so. Have there not been times with us all when the world upon which we have professed to turn our backs has gained an extra power over us. Its glitter attracted us—its wealth allured us—and for a moment we were almost tempted to think we had made a hard bargain in giving it up. We needed something to recall us to ourselves and our Lord; and we found that something in the word. How that text "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul," tore off the tinsel and stripped the world of its charms, and made us seek his face to find our joys. How often when we have been dragged downwards with thoughts of mammon and covetous desires, the word has come to our rescue and said with a voice that commanded attention, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven," and at that voice we were led to seek his face as our highest good.

Yes, the Bible is God's reminder to our naturally earthly souls; and in every chapter from Genesis to Revelation there sounds the call to seek a Father's face. It is only as we read the word as God's word *to us* that we obtain the sweetness it has to bestow. It is recorded of

that man of God—M'Cheyne—that to the very end of his life his family devotions were full of life and marvellous unction chiefly for this reason, that in his very manner of reading the chapter he reminded you of a man poring into the sands for pieces of fine gold, and from time to time holding up to you with delight what he had found. "One gem," he used to say, "from this ocean is worth all the pebbles from earthly streams."

2. The call to seek His face is heard in *the means of grace he has provided.* The calm and quiet of the Sabbath day is a call heavenward. There is something about it that casts over the soul an unseen but felt influence as

> "Composed and softened by the day
> All things another aspect wear."

Who among us has not known the sweet experience of having all turbulent feelings hushed into serenity by the magic wand of the holy day. Often have I before coming into this great city to labour, strolled out of the country town on a Sabbath afternoon, and under some spreading tree sat down to revel in the thoughts that sprang from the associations of the day. The quiet rustle of the leaves overhead—the soothing sigh of the passing breeze as it glided through the boughs and kissed the cheek—the merry chirp of the bird as it flitted from the hedge row—and the bleat of the sheep scattered over the adjoining meadow—all these rural sounds seemed to me to blend in one sweet chorus of "seek ye my face," and the very daisies, as they turned their sweet white faces to the sky; and the butter-cups, as they laughed in the golden light, seemed to write the same loving invite upon the velvet sward. And even in this vast metropolis, bereft as it is of nature's voices, is there not something in the very cessation of its commercial toil, that quotes the text? Blessed Sabbath! God's gift to toiling man! In thy quiet hours I hear my Saviour's voice calling me to "Come and rest awhile." But not only in the day is the voice heard. It sounds from the *open sanctuary.* Let some would-be-extra-spiritual-persons sneer at the "House of God," and call it worldly if they like. There are many of us who bless God for it. It has often proved His voice to us. We have come depressed with care and harassed with the world, but in its quiet and holy services we have heard our Father's voice bidding us seek his face.

But above all, we are most loudly called by the voice of the "*Mercy Seat.*"

"Ah, friends, who can rightly estimate the value of the privilege of prayer? A throne of grace that is always free? The glorious liberty of coming at all times, with a certainty of finding it a time when "Thou mayest be found?" In times of sorrow—in hours of bereavement—in seasons of darkness and dismay—and in the confused noise of every day's life battle—there sounds forth from the "blood-stained mercy seat," the call to seek a face that is ever radiant with the smiles of unutterable love.

3. The call is heard *in manifest mercies.* God's acts of loving-kindness towards us are not to be received by us with scarcely a thought, and buried in the deep grave of base ingratitude without our learning

from them any lesson, or hearing from them any voice. His mercies are his most loving reminders of himself. They are golden fingers beckoning us to nearer fellowship with heaven. A happy home—a loving wife—a frame buoyant with health—the comforts of life denied to multitudes of others, all these and a thousand other mercies enjoyed by many of us, call to us loudly to "seek the face" of him who freely bestows them all. Believe me, friends, our mercies are often removed through our loving them too well, through our accepting their comfort, but refusing to obey their voice.

4. The call is often given *by trials*. This point may, perhaps, come more home to the majority present than any of the previous ones. We are too prone to look upon our sorrows as tokens of anger, instead of our Father's voice to us. There is just as much love (would we could always realize it) in the rod as in the kiss. The troubles of life give identically the same call as what we term its mercies. I say, "what we term," because were it not for our short-sightedness we should see that our very bitterest sorrows ought to be placed in the catalogue of "Mercies." Have you, friend, during the past year been called to pass through the cold waters of bereavement—loss and disappointment? They were but your God's voice saying to a soul he saw making earth too much its home, "seek ye my face." It may be so again with you this year. With all my heart I wish you a "happy year," but yet I cannot dare to hope that it will be one free from all dark days, but this I do hope and pray that with all of us every trial may be heard as a call "upward." God often deals with us as a farmer did with a sheep that would not follow in the way he wanted. He took its little lamb away, and placing it upon his shoulders walked along the road. It was quite sufficient, the bleat of the lamb drew as with unseen cords the mother after. Our dearest loves and comforts are often taken by the "great shepherd" to lead us in His footsteps.

5. The call is heard by the *influences of the Spirit*. I feel that here I have a great difficulty in describing what I mean. The sweet workings of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers is something too delicate to be pourtrayed in words. Let me, therefore, set forth the experience I mean by calling memory to do its work. Can we not all remember how after some long season of spiritual drought, when the heavens above us have been as brass, there has come into our soul a fresh spring time. Previously to that we had found no blessing in anything. The Bible had seemed to us a closed book, its verses and chapters yielded us no joy. Prayer itself had become almost a weariness, as time after time we rose from our knees as unrefreshed as when we bowed them, and even the very services of the sanctuary had lost their charm. When all at once a *something* crept over our spirits that defies description. That *something* melted the heart that had so long been frostbound. Tears began to flow, but more through joy than grief. The dead weight was slowly raised from our heart. We opened the word that had appeared so barren of comfort; and lo! every verse sparkled with heavenly dew. We knelt to pray, and instead of a stern unrefreshing duty, we found it bliss. We poured out our confessions and desires, and rose from the "Mercy Seat" new men. What had

worked the change so rapidly yet so completely? We could hardly say, save that in the quiet of the soul amidst its gloom and spiritual desolation there had sounded the voice "seek ye my face," and that voice had turned our winter into summer gladness.

II. THE ECHO. Having listened to the many calls of God to seek his face, we will now lend an ear to the saint's response. What echo does his voice awaken? What returning cry does it give birth to? Listen!! "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." The first thing we will notice about the echo is *that it is one of the heart.* "*My heart* said unto Thee, &c." There are many who say it with the lip that never mean it in the heart, and there are multitudes who say it by their actions that never breathe it from their souls. A *mere* verbal echo—a parrot cry—is not what is here described. In such an echo there is no melody that God delights in. The veriest formalist whose soul and spirit is as dry as parchment can utter the words though he be as ignorant as a post of the experience he professes. It is also quite possible to give by our actions an exceedingly loud echo whilst the heart remains as silent as death. You may read the word—utter the prayer—keep the Sabbath—attend the means of grace—and yet be a stranger to the Psalmist's feeling. Like a waxwork figure moved by machinery you may nod, and smile, and lift up your hands, and yet possess not one iota more of life. Let us here put the searching question to ourselves, "Does *my heart* say, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek." All worship (so-called) wherein the heart is wanting is nothing less than a solemn mockery—a hideous sham, devoid of all profit to the performer—I dare not say worshipper—and an insult to the God before whom it is performed.

God grant that throughout the weeks and months of this year the silence of our hearts may be broken by this oft-repeated response to our Father's call. *How has it been with us during the past year?* When the word has called us, what answer have we given? Have we often gone to that blessed book to hear its voice or is it a neglected volume, in the very dust of which that rests on its cover, our own shame might be written? Have the ten thousand mercies we have received led us to closer communion, and called us to deeper consecration, or have their voices been lost in the caverns of an ungrateful heart? Have our trials been purifying fires making the gold of our graces brighter reflectors of the refiner's face, or have we just 'put up' with them in stolid indifference, or murmured under them with a hardening heart? These are important questions, for trials and mercies never leave us as they find us, but either mar or make our christian life. What answer have we given to the call sounding from the means of grace? Has the response been heard in the sanctuary and prayer meeting, or do both testify against us and exclaim, "We called but ye refused?" What obedience have we given to the sweet monitions of the Spirit? Have we been quick to yield ourselves to their inspirations, or have we done our best to strangle them in their birth? Has the Holy Spirit been invited or grieved? Courted or quenched? If one may speak in this matter for the many, there is cause for deepest humiliation on the part of all. The call has been ringing clear and

often given, whilst the echo at the best has been but faint and indistinct, and too often, alas! unheard.

I will now conclude this sermon by two or three words of practical advice, and the first is this. *Be ever listening to hear the voice.* We often lose its melody by inattention and spiritual drowsiness. We permit the world to occupy so much of our attention, that in its conflicting cries we miss the voice which alone could make our heart rejoice. Whilst engaged in life's busy world—enjoying daily mercies—bearing our appointed burdens, or taking part in the service of God's house, let us ever be straining the ear to catch, amid other sounds, the still small voice of love inviting us to seek His face. Happy is that man who is ever found thus striving to detect the call of heaven in the providences of life. He shall hear whispers of love never heard by the unwatchful saint, and shall possess secret joys unknown to the inattentive soul. The next word of loving advice is this. When you hear the call *give the echo at once.* Delay not one moment. Stay not a minute, for in so doing you may lose a blessing. The echo delayed may never be given. The sweet influences of the Spirit trifled with may die away. Does something say to you, "seek ye my face in my word," then take down the book and reply, "Thy face Lord will I seek," for perhaps, if resisting the desire you say "there will be time for that a few hours hence," when that time comes the desire may have departed, the book will appear, "sealed," and a season of refreshing will have been lost. Does the same voice within your soul say "pray," then pray at once. If you can, get away somewhere alone, and whilst the voice calls to prayer, pray. If unable to obtain solitude, then lift up the heart in quiet, for thy God can read the desire of the heart. But any way delay not to give the echo. The moment the sighing of the breeze is heard set the sails, for if not it may pass away and leave thy soul like "a painted ship on a painted ocean." God only knows what seasons of fellowship and happiness we lose by refraining from obeying the first impulses of the Spirit. It will indeed be a happy year, and one of spiritual growth, if in all our hearts, before the call has died away in silence, the echoes are awakened on every side. Let us close with this cheering thought.

The seeker shall never be disappointed. Listen to our Father's declaration, "I have never said to the seeking seed of Jacob. "Seek ye my face in vain." Earnest seeker, you shall assuredly be a happy finder, and though at present your heart's echo seems to have awakened no other, yet persevere, and soon shall you hear the voice, "Behold my face." God grant that the call and the echo and the result may abundantly be ours throughout this year of 1870.

Scripture read, I Samuel 3.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—84 Part I—27, 774.

P.S.—We have supplied in this sermon some of the things we *meant* to have said, but omitted through our indisposition.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHAT LACK I YET?

A Sermon to Young Men,

DELIVERED LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 13TH, 1870, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?"—MATTHEW xix—20.

THESE are the words of the young ruler, who running to our Saviour, and kneeling down before Him with earnestness betrayed in every line of his countenance, said—"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Our Lord, meeting him upon the ground which he himself had taken, viz.;—obedience to the law; answered him, thou knowest the commandments—do not commit adultery—do not kill—do not bear false witness—honour thy father and thy mother." The young man quickly and joyfully replied "all these things have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?" You have the answer of our Master, yet lackest thou one thing; go sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and take up thy cross and follow me." The sad conclusion of the short interview was this—the young man went away exceedingly sorrowful, for he was very rich.

Now we feel that in this special service to young men there is need for us to be exceedingly careful what words we utter, and what motive prompts them. Perhaps there may be some in this great company who have come here this evening expecting to hear something new, or something out of the way and startling—some nice question discussed, or something speculative debated upon We say to such—"you will be bitterly disappointed, friend." The burning desire of those who conduct the Young Men's Bible-class in connection with which this sermon is preached, is not that you may have your ears tickled—not that you may be merely pleased and spend a happy hour, but that you may be saved. It was good advice that dear old Mr. Jay of Bath, gave to a young minister,—"when you preach, aim at getting something that will *strike and stick*," and it is our desire to say this evening, by the Spirit's help, some words that will strike to the heart, and having struck home, there stick. May the Lord now put His hand upon our hand, as the prophet did upon the hand of the young man; so that when we draw the bow at a venture, the arrow may be divinely aimed and carried directly to the heart by the great Master. The Lord grant that some bolt taken from the quiver of his word may pierce its way between the joints of the harness, and force its passage through coats of triple steel, that the slain of Jehovah may be a great multitude.

Let us notice first of all, *the young man's character;* then secondly, *the young man's question;* and then lastly, *the answer given to the young man.*

First of all let us look at THE YOUNG MAN'S CHARACTER, and see if he is not a representative of a great many who are found here to-night. The first thing I notice in the character of this young man is, that he was no Sadducee—he had not linked himself with those who held the theory that the grave was the end of all, that there was no resurrection—no hereafter—no eternity. The young man, from his question, evidently believed that there was a hereafter, "good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit *eternal life?*" Whether he mixed with the Sadduces or not, whether they tried to influence him or no, we are not told, but if they did, they completely failed. Eternal life was a reality to him, he felt and believed that beyond death and the grave there was a ceaseless duration of being; he knew that he had to enter upon it, and he yearned that his eternity might be one of life and endless joy, and not of death and never-ending woe; hence the question.

Friends, most. if not all of you, hold the same belief that this young man did. You believe that there is a hereafter. In spite of all that has been said to the contrary, you cannot but believe that eternity is an awful reality, and no mere nightmare of weak minds. Although called upon perhaps to mix with many bold scoffers, and to work in company with desperate infidels; although perhaps necessitated to hear these old-fashioned theories as they are called, laughed at from Monday morning until Saturday night, and although called to do business with the numerous Sadducees of the nineteenth century, you have not been able to persuade yourselves as yet that there is not a *hereafter*. And if in some small measure you sometimes succeed in doing so, do you not find that all of a sudden there comes a mighty conviction that sweeps away your theories like cobwebs or autumn leaves from the forest boughs, and there comes a voice that will make itself heard, saying, "*there is, there is* a hereafter, and after I am dead I shall yet live." Does unbelief say, "if a man die, shall he live again?" The answer echoes in your heart, YES! HE WILL. With the young man then you believe most firmly in the existence of a future state; nay more, you not only believe in a future state of joyful life, but you also believe that there is a hell, although that dreadful fact has been so boldly and blasphemously called in question, and although many holding a high position in the religious world, and who ought to know better, if they do not, are disposed to dispute it. You, friends, have not yet been able to throw it aside as an exploded dogma. Hell is a belief of your soul, and I can imagine many a young man standing up and saying, "although it is a terrible thing to believe, yet I do believe it, and although I know I am not prepared for eternity, yet at the same time I believe with all my heart that there is not only an eternity of bliss for those who die in the Lord, but there is also an eternity of woe for those who die out of Christ; I often wish I could think otherwise, for I condemn myself in my belief; bnt it is a sheer impossibility. Hell stares me in the face as a declared fact, and I accept it as such." Sometimes, perhaps, you have tried to grasp what eternity really is, and you have said with the speaker over and over again, the words—for ever! for ever!! for ever!!! and the more you have uttered the words, the deeper the depth seemed in them, until at last you have been obliged to come to the same conclusion as the deaf and dumb boy, who, when asked "what is eternity?" wrote, eternity, eternity is the life-time of the

Almighty." Thus I think in this first characteristic of the ruler, we have displayed, as in a polished mirror, the character and belief of the majority present.

But notice further, that not only did he believe that there was a hereafter, *but he was thoughtful about it.* There are a great many who believe in an eternity, but by their life give the lie to their faith; they not only believe there is a hell, but seem desirous to have their faith confirmed by actual experience; believing in a perdition, they nevertheless rush madly into it. Now so it is with you, like this young man, you cannot be thoughtless about it. You believe it, and more than that, you cannot shake its influence off; you may have tried, but the word *eternity* has haunted you and followed you like your own shadow. Doubtless this young ruler had plenty of other things to occupy his attention, and an abundance of pleasures sufficient to amuse him, but wherever he went, an unknown fathomless future stared him in the face, until at last unable to bear the crushing anxiety any longer, he cried, "good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Has it not been so with some of you? No matter where you have been, or how engaged, the thought of an eternity beyond the grave has lowered over your head like some huge storm-cloud—you have been forced by some irresistible power to take your stand upon the shore of that boundless ocean, until the roar of its Atlantic waves has deafened you to every softer sound. Horror struck, you plunged like a maniac into scenes of licentious pleasure and mirth, in the vain hope that in them its solemn tones might be escaped. Fruitless effort!! Amidst wild and riotous mirth you have heard its funeral dirge, and notes only become the more fearful by the contrast. In every cup of sparkling joy you found a dash of gall, it was eternity. In every song you heard a jarring note, it was eternity. Like a horrible nightmare, that word has filled you with fright, and the more you struggle to escape its horror, the more intense it grows.

I remember having read an instance of the marvellous power this single word will sometimes wield: it was as follows:—A lady having spent, as was her custom, an afternoon and evening at the card table and in the ball room, came home late at night and found her servant, who was a godly girl, occupying her time in reading a pious book; she bent over the girl's shoulder, and looking for a moment at the open page, laughingly said, "Poor melancholy soul! I do wonder you don't get tired of reading such dry stuff as that." She retired to rest, but not to sleep, for all night long she tossed to and fro, weeping and sighing. Coming down in the morning, the servant noticed how ill she looked, and kindly asked her if there was anything the matter. At last bursting into a flood of tears, the lady said, "Oh! it was one word I happened to see in your book, when I looked over you last night, that troubles me; it has haunted me ever since." "What word, mistress?" said the girl, "That dreadful word *eternity*," replied the lady, "would to God there were none, or that I was prepared for it."

O eternity, thou word of boundless meaning, let thy majestic tones completely drown all other sounds in every young man's heart to-night, until, without a solitary exception, they all shall be awakened into earnestness. Thank God! many of you, like the young man in our text, have been led, not only to believe in it, but to seek a preparation for it.

There is another thing about this young man that speaks well for

him, namely, that *his life had been without reproach*. What he says we may believe, for his character is one free from all deceit. Certainly our Lord, who knew all things, believed his statement, for we read that "He loved him." With all truthfulness, therefore, he said in answer to the duties enjoined upon him by Christ, "all these have I kept from my youth up." When our Lord spake of purity, no guilty shudder passed through him, no damning remembrance of immorality oppressed him. He had lived a life free from sensuality, and had no pale sorrowful face haunting him in his midnight dreams, and whispering in his ears, "I will charge you with my ruin at the Judgment day." In answer to the command "Love thy neighbour as thyself," he could reply "My hands are clean;" for if I am wealthy it is not through building my fortune on the ruin of others. I have never distilled my comforts from the life blood of my neighbours, or surrounded myself with luxuries by taking the poor man by the throat. If I have sometimes prayed at the corners of streets it has not been with a "widow's house" sticking in my throat, and the curses of desolate orphans hurled on my head. What I have, has been obtained honourably, and with all my getting I have not lost the love of the poor. "Well said, young man! I honour you for it, and I would to God it could be the boast of more who roll in affluence." 'Honour thy father and mother.' "This also have I done," he replied, "I have never tried to prove my right to be called a man by speaking slightingly of her who gave me birth, and my father's grey hairs have ever received a tribute of respect from me. The old people at home will bear witness to what kind of a son I have been." "Good again young man. I wonder not my master loved you, filial affection must ever command esteem." Now I doubt not that in this third particular of the young man's character many present have felt themselves described, and there has been in the hearts of some of you a feeling almost akin to self satisfaction, as hearing the good points mentioned, you have said, "Yes, that is my character. I am just like him."

I do not for a moment suppose that I am speaking this evening to many who are openly licentious and profane. Such may be here; I I trust there are—but rather a mass of young men who possess many amiable qualities, and who in many respects might serve as examples to those who make far more profession; and this brings us to the second point, which is

II. THE YOUNG MAN'S QUESTION. I think I can almost see the self-satisfied smile that plays on his countenance—"surely," he says, "I am right now. I have said "yes" to all the requirements mentioned, and now what do I lack beside? Let us do justice to the young man and say first, this question *was not asked boastingly*. There was nothing of the Pharisee in the young man. His meaning was not "I challenge Thee, O Lord! to show me a single flaw in my character, or point out a solitary excellence I possess not." Not at all so. He asked the question perhaps ignorantly, but at the same time earnestly. We willingly grant that you ask the question in the same spirit. You say to-night, "I do not pretend to represent myself as perfect. I would not boast of what I am; nor glory in my own excellence;" and in the simplicity of your heart you ask *what* do I lack beside?

But if it was not asked boastingly it was asked *ignorantly*. This

young man had never seen the spirituality of the law. He did not understand what the law actually required, or he would not have ventured the question. What the law really requires perhaps is the last thing we learn before we come to Christ. Until convinced of the Spirit we are perfectly satisfied if we give a formal and partial obedience to its commands; but when the light of heaven-given knowledge shines upon the law, then we see it is an utter impossibility to be saved by obedience ot it. It is not only "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "but thou shalt not lust." It is not only "Thou shalt not kill;" but "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." It is not only "Thou shalt not steal," but "thou shalt not covet." The requirements of the law, as explained by Jesus, strike far deeper than the actions of the life, and reach to the desires and motives of the heart. It is only when the spirituality of the law is thus perceived, that all hope of ever being saved by it dies within us; and seeing our miserable condition, we cry with all pride crushed out of us, "God, be merciful to us *sinners*." Ignorant of the requirements of the law, he asked as many of you do the question, "What lack I yet?"

But do not you think with me that this question was one *more of earnestness* than any thing else? Give the yonng man his due; he meant "just show me what I lack, and I will go and do it at once. Just tell me what is wanting and I will supply the deficiency immediately." I grant you that when told he did not do it, but that was because he did not know his true character, or his own weakness. Are not you friend like him? Are there not some here saying and meaning it, "Lord, just show me what I lack and I will go and do it at once." As an eloquent preacher not far from this neighbourhood once said: "If God were to say to sinners walk from London to Newcastle with spikes in your shoes and you shall be saved, there would be a general pilgrimage there; but the simplicity of the plan of salvation staggers them."

And now the question having been asked, let us be all attention to hear the answer.

III. THE ANSWER TO THE YOUNG MAN'S QUESTION.

Before giving in detail our answer to his inquiry, let us listen to Christ's. The young man came to our Saviour on the ground of legal obedience, so he was answered in the same manner. "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me." Our all-seeing Lord at once put his finger upon the weak point in his character and pierced him through the flaw in his armour. He made him see in a moment how little he knew of himself when he asked the foolish question. With all mere moralists it is the same; there is always some weak point which, when touched, causes the true man to spring into sight. Doubtless many of you have read that marvellous poem of England's blind poet, John Milton, entitled "Paradise Lost." If so, you will remember that he describes Satan first entering the garden to tempt our first parents disguised as a toad, pouring his venom into Eve's ear as she lay wrapt in sleep, thus giving her troublous dreams and filling her with discontented thoughts. But his entry there has been perceived by the ever watchful host of God—the shining ones. Gabriel

gives command to search the garden through, and leave no nook or bower unexplored.

> "Ithuriel and Zephon, with wing'd speed
> Search through this garden, leave unsearch'd no nook."

Swiftly they obey, for

> "So saying, on he led his radiant files,
> Dazzling the moon; these to the bower direct
> In search of whom they sought; him there they found.
> Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve,
> Assaying by his devilish art to reach
> The organs of her fancy."

Him thus intent, Ithuriel touched lightly with his spear. At that touch up starts discovered and surprised before them, the grisly King of Hell.

What Ithuriel's spear was to the supposed toad, this answer of Christ was to the young man. At our Lord's touch, the concealed character came out, and the hidden devil manifested itself; he turned his back upon the Saviour, and went away. But let us now enter more into detail as we attempt to give the answer requested, and God grant that even now the Holy Spirit may exert his mighty power, and drive the words home to many a heart. "What lack I yet?" He lacked, young men, what alas some of you do, *a knowledge of himself, and of God's plan of salvation.* He had never seen himself as he really was, *a lost sinner.* Had he known himself, his language to our Lord had been far different from what it was, it would have been more after this sort, "Lord a hell-deserving-sinner bends before Thee, and seeks for mercy; shouldst thou spurn him from Thy feet, and consign him to endless misery, Thou wouldst be infinitely just, and he could say naught against the sentence; yet for thine own name's sake, have pity and forgive." He, with many of you, had never known what it is to be tried before the bar of God and hear the verdict "*guilty*" passed, and feel himself condemned. He came to Christ with a heart that had never felt its guilt or been broken with repentance. This knowledge of himself he lacked, and a fearful lack it is, for he who has never felt his disease, will, never taste the medicine; and he who has never seen himself as lost, will never rejoice at being saved. He lacked also a knowledge of God's way of a sinner's salvation. That one word "do" reveals his ignorance, for had he known how God saves the sinner, he would have also known that *his doing* was unrequired. "Do," is the religion of the law. "Finished," is the religion of Jesus. There is just this difference between salvation by the law and by the gospel. The former is a way of two letters DO. The latter of four DONE. Until convinced by the Spirit, the cry of the man is what shall I DO? but when taught of the Spirit his exclamation is, "I trust, O blessed Jesus to what thou hast DONE."

What, dear friend, is your trust—is it one of two letters or four? If of two only, then, like the young man in our text you are still lacking the knowledge of God's way of saving the sinner.

And now let us for a few minutes have some close conversation together. Will you please forget that I am a minister, and only think of me as a young man like yourselves, who, having tasted the joy of being saved, is anxious that you should do the same. I wish to ask you a plain straightforward question, and ask you with equal frankness

to give a truthful answer, not to me but to the God before whom we shall both have to appear. I ask *you*, young man, and *you*, and *you* have you ever known what it is to feel yourself condemned? Has the sentence of your doom ever rung in your ears? Are you now willing to be saved God's way though it put you into the dust, or are you still clinging to some fancied goodness of your own? If so, I ask you to-night ere you retire to rest to pray this prayer before God until he answers it.—"Lord show me *myself*." A young man some years ago prayed this prayer for weeks, until at last the Lord answered him, and showed him such terrible things about his own defilement, that in an agony he cried, "And now, Lord, show me Thyself." That prayer was also answered, for Jesus manifested himself to him as his all-sufficient Saviour.

My dear friend—would that I could say brother—let both these prayers be yours to-night. "Lord show me myself, and let me see my depravity—let me feel my sinfulness though the sight blast all my comforts and break my heart." And then pray "Lord, shew me Thyself. Shew me what Christ has done and suffered for me. Now thou hast shown me my malady, shew me *Thy* medicine for it. Now thou hast smitten my heart and broken it, graciously bind it up."

"What lack I yet?" *He lacked life, or a change of heart.* He was what we attempted to describe to many of you the other Sabbath afternoon—a whited sepulchre. Outwardly, fair to look upon; yea, even lovely in its purity—but *do not go within.* Were you to enter you would only find it icy cold—dreary dark—full of the smell of death, and inhabited by corruption itself. So was it with the young man, a character outwardly spotless, only hiding a heart full of uncleanliness and spiritual death. My brother, let me again ask you a question. "Have you been converted? Has the heart as well as the life been changed? Is there beneath your breast a heart as cold and lifeless as a stone, or is there one of flesh? Take my Master's word for it, if your heart is not changed you are a lost man. If there be not that radical change *within*, I care not what there is *without*. You lack the new birth, and with that you lack everything. This thought leads us to our closing one, namely, that he lacked *the one thing needful.* It is possible only to lack one thing, but that one want to be such a one as to render everything else valueless. Let me try in one or two illustrations to show you what I mean. There is a man in yonder blazing house that seems one sheet of flame from basement to garret. I see him as he vainly shouts from the upstairs window. There is only *one* thing he lacks, but that is the fire escape. See, dear friend, in his danger your position. But I will multiply similes, if by any means I may wake you up to your great want. A fearful tempest is brewing—the clouds charged with omnipotent thunder are lowering over your head—the first heavy drops are just beginning to fall—the lightning already scathes the distant horizon, and every successive flash comes nearer—the heavens above are contracted into one black frown, and threaten to blast you for ever. You just lack *one* thing, and that is a refuge from the storm, a covert from the tempest. Again, I see a deluge poured out upon you—the waters spread on every hand, and every moment their black angry waves rise higher. Hill top after hill top is covered, and still the waters deepen. Ah! I see you now as you fight

like a madman for foothold upon the only mountain peak that rears its head above the advancing tide. You are now alone, the only one left, and the cold waters seem to mock your agony of soul as they rise inch by inch. There is but *one* thing you lack to save you, and that is the ark that glides silently by and soon disappears within the gloom. Friend, you are called to pass through an icy stream called death. Already you stand upon its bank and an irresistible power urges you forward. You can see its depth is fathomless. and awestruck you put your foot within its stream. There is but *one* thing you lack, and that is the ferry boat. Yet once again. In a few short years at most we must meet at the Judgment throne of Jehovah. Yes, we *must* meet. In a few minutes this great throng will have dispersed, and in all probability I shall never again behold some of you on earth; but I shall meet you. There is not a young man present that will not be found in that crowd before the throne. The day me-thinks has come. The trump of the archangel sounds, "Come to judgment," and tremblingly you obey its summons. Why tremble so? Because you find out when alas it is too late, that you lack only *one* thing, but that one thing is the only thing that can stand you in that awful hour. "Rocks fall on me, hills cover me," is the cry of anguish extorted by the lack of the one thing needful.

Thinking over this subject in my study, and trying, if possible, to pierce the future of some, I suddenly conceived myself standing at the death-bed of one of to-night's hearers. I heard your voice as it grew husky in death, and watched, with tearful eyes, your last desperate struggle for breath. Your mother sobbed in my ears "he is gone, he is gone." Anxious to know your end, I thought I followed your spirit in its upward flight! oh, how intently I watched you, and said, "He was at the special service for young men on February 13th—is he safe?" I followed you up and up, and lo, I saw the gates of pearl before you, and my heart leaped for joy, as I exclaimed, "Thank God all is well." But just at that moment one of the shining ones met you, and placing his hand upon you, said, "Stop, young man, what is your warrant to enter?" Eagerly I listened for your answer, hoping it might but be "THE BLOOD!" but no! I heard you say "I have not been guilty of this crime, or committed that sin; I have done this, and tried to do that, in fact there is but *one thing* I lack, and that is conversion." "Sir, said the angel, *that one exception damns you.*" My heart bled, as I beheld you hurled like lightning from Heaven's gate to hell's abyss. *What lack I yet?* God grant that this question may ring in your ears, until convinced you are lacking that one thing needful, you cast yourself as a sinner, into the arms of Christ, and find your all in him. The Lord save you all, and give you all that one thing you now lack, for Jesus' sake.—AMEN.

Scripture read, Luke 18—30.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—413—549—366.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

WITHOUT CHRIST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 13TH, 1870, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Without Christ."—EPHESIANS ii—12.

IN this chapter Paul does his very best to magnify the exceeding riches of the grace of God. So jealous was he of the glory of free grace that he laid the axe at the root of the tree of human pride with ringing stroke. He shows the members of the church at Ephesus how entirely dependent they were for their salvation upon the full, free, sovereign favour of God. He reiterates over and over again the fact that they were saved by grace through faith, and that *that* faith was not of themselves, but was in itself a pure gift of God. "Not of works, lest any man should boast," was the apostle's much-loved creed and oft-repeated assertion. Having magnified the grace of God as demonstrated in the salvation of the sinner, he tries next to stir up the hearts of the members of the church to abounding and overflowing gratitude for that grace having ever touched them, and embraced them in its loving arms; for saith he, "remember what you once were; turn over the pages of your memory; go back just a few years; think of what you were before mercy met with you. If grace had never magnified itself in thee, what would thy career have been, what would be thy present position? Let the past rise up before you. Think, at that time—with some of you only a few years back; with some of you only perhaps a few weeks—remember, saith he, "that at that time ye were without Christ." But now behold the marvellous difference; "ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Shall such a marvellous act of God's grace be done in you, and shall your hearts remain cold, and still, and lifeless, frozen in base, unworthy ingratitude? Awake! awake!! utter a song, and extol in flowing praise Him who by His sovereign grace hath made you thus to differ.

Now, in Paul's description of the sinner before conversion, you will notice he uses several negatives; and often that picture is the most striking that abounds the most in negative tints. The descriptions we have of heaven are chiefly negative; we are told of what there is not in heaven far more than of what there is. All we know of heaven

is (speaking generally) what it lacks. We know that in heaven there is no sorrow, no pain, no sickness, no curse, no night. Multiply the number of negatives—tell me what there is not, and I shall perhaps get a clearer idea of what there is.

Now, as in case of describing heaven by negatives, so is it in the picture of the sinner's condition. Paul tells me here what the sinner has not, and then by finding what he fails to possess I can more clearly find out what he actually has. He is a man *without* Christ; he is one who is a stranger and a foreigner to the grace of God; one without God in the world and without hope. Often, as we have already remarked, you can best find out what a man has by describing what he has not. To use a very homely illustration, I think if I wished to stir up your hearts to liberality, in order to help some distressed one, I should try to picture, in negative tints, that he had no fire, no blankets, no shoes for the children, no comforts in life, no friends; and then, having shown you what the man had not, you would be the better able to form an opinion as to the little that the man did possess. Now you have here the picture of the sinner drawn in negative tints. In a word, *he is a man without Christ.* Now I know that if the Holy Spirit will only enable the speaker to-night to bring out in some humble measure the real teaching of the text, and if that same Holy Spirit will but give power to the word, and apply it to every hearer, so that we may in some small measure understand what it is to be *without* Christ, there will surely be hearts constrained to bend and break.

"WITHOUT CHRIST." Let us notice first of all, WHAT IS THE STATE DESCRIBED HERE? or in other words, WHAT IS IT FOR A MAN TO BE WITHOUT CHRIST? And then, when we have tried to delineate that state, we will notice secondly, THE HORROR OF THE STATE; for the most awful thing that can be said of any man or woman is: he is a man *without* Christ, or she is a woman *without* Christ.

Now in order that none may escape, let us have exceedingly close dealing with our own hearts, and with each other, on this point. *What is the state described here—what is it to be without Christ?* Let me first tell you what it is not to be without Christ. *It does not necessarily mean to be without any knowledge of Christ.* When we quoted the words "without Christ," some of you no doubt had immediate visions such as these before your eyes; you thought of foreign lands where the glory of the gospel has never arisen; you thought of the heathen dwelling in thick darkness, and of those who still sojourn in the land of the shadow of death; you pictured to yourselves the deluded Hottentot; and conjured up before your eyes a miserable multitude of men and women who had never heard the name of Jesus, that who are perhaps at this moment bowing down to stocks of wood and stone; and you said with pity '*they* are the people without Christ.' And some of you thought of the courts and slums, reeking with foulest vice, and dark as heathendom itself, that are to be found not far off from your own residences; you thought of some of those "City Arabs" who have not been brought up, but *dragged* through life; you thought of one of those, who to the City Missionary's question as to

whether he knew the Lord Jesus Christ, replied, "he didn't think he lived in the street as he had never heard his name mentioned." But stay, Sir, we have to come nearer home. Without Christ does not necessarily imply that a man is without a knowledge of Him. It is possible for a man to live in a blaze of gospel light, and yet be as much without Christ as the heathen who has never heard the name of Jesus breathed. It is possible to be brought up from infancy with the name of Jesus sounding in your ear more frequently than any other; to come and hear a rough but faithful and plain preacher week by week; and although yourself surrounded by gospel privileges to be as much without Christ as if you had never heard the name of Jesus in infancy, or been brought in early years to hear the gospel truth, but been cradled in heathenism and brought up in the blackness of ignorance. Nay, we will go further and say, there are many persons who know a great deal of Christ, and yet they are without Him. It is possible for a man to know the history of Christ, and yet be without Him. There is a man yonder who knows perhaps far more of this book than some of us do, who we trust can truthfully call ourselves God's children. He knows the life and history of Christ, and can recount it without turning to a single page. His sermons, His life, His bloody sweat, His cross, His passion, His death. All these things the man has at his fingers' ends, and at the tip of his tongue. He could stand up and talk glibly on this platform of the life and death of Christ, and perhaps draw a picture of Christ's present glory; and yet the man himself is *without* Christ.

There is a vast difference between knowledge and possession. I may know a great deal about a thing, but that does not in any way prove that I possess it. Why, there is a man there who knows all about the coinage of this country—the manufacture of bank notes—all about gold and silver refining—and yet the man himself is utterly destitute and without a sixpence. He may be able to detect the genuineness of a sovereign by its ring, and yet perhaps not have a penny with which to buy a loaf of bread for himself or children. It is possible for a man to be so well up in the history of Christ—to be so well taught in the externals of religion, that we may scarcely be able to detect whether he is a genuine Christian or a sham, and yet not be in possession of Christ. A man yonder, who is a chemist, may be able to tell you all about the properties of water—he knows its component parts, and could lecture about its wonders for the hour together, and yet the man dies on the arid desert of want of a single drop. And think you not there are many who know much of this book in the head—much theoretically of Christ—but who are dying for want of Him? Alas, yes, thousands upon thousands. Without Christ does not therefore necessarily mean, you will perceive, a man without any knowledge of Him.

But let us go a step further. To be without Christ does not necessarily mean *to be without any respect for Him.* A man without Christ need not perforce be the bold, blasphemous, profane swearer, who only mentions the holy name to mock it. There are men without

Christ who bow their knee every time the name of Jesus is mentioned there are many without Christ who walk with the most sedate solemnity to their places of worship, with the Bible, the Prayer Book, and Hymn Book in their hands. They are horrified if they hear an irreverent word spoken of Christ. There are multitudes of men who pay all the outward decorum, and a superabundance of it, to the religion of Jesus, and who yet lack just this one thing—Christ Himself. There are respectful knee-bending, psalm-singing heathen as well as blasphemous heathen. As you came along the street this evening you were compelled to hear the round oath of the sabbath-breaker as he passed by. With a shudder, you exclaimed, "thank God, I am not like that man;" and yet you *are* like that man, for that man is simply without Christ, and you, with all your respect for the name of Christ, are similarly destitute.

Remember too, that to be without Christ does not necessarily mean to be *without the name of Christ*. No, there are many who bear the name of Christ that have not *Him* Himself. You may go to your Churches to find men without Christ—you may go to your Baptist Chapels, or any other denominational sanctuaries you please, and in those buildings you will find men, who, although members of the respective churches, and bearing the Saviour's name are yet without Christ. You may (sad fact) go even into some of our pulpits and find men, as Dr. Guthrie describes, "like skeletons holding out in their bony hands a flaming torch." Like sign posts, they direct others the road, but never move a foot along it themselves. Like church bells, they ring others in, but themselves remain without. A means of life to others, they are yet spiritual corpses themselves.

What is it then to be without Christ? I will tell you in a few words. To be without Christ means *first, to be without any faith in Him*. It is faith that gives possession. I cannot say Christ is mine until by simple faith I have stretched out my hand and laid it upon Him, and so appropriated Him. The moment, as a sinner, I trust Jesus, that moment he becomes mine. A man who is without Christ, is a man who has Christ standing without, knocking at the door of his heart. It is when He is without that we are without Him. I think I can hear some of you say, "that is very simple; but how am I able to tell whether I have faith or no?" We will put a test which I think will come home to every heart. The man without Christ is a man who is *without love to Christ*. Faith worketh by love; and if there is faith in a man's soul, it will not be long before it shows itself in love. A man without Christ is one who has never sung with gushing heart:—

"My Jesus I love Thee, I know Thou art mine,
For Thee all the pleasures of sin I resign;
My gracious Redeemer, my Saviour art Thou,
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."

The man who is without Christ is an utter stranger to that sweet experience which makes us sing,—

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest."

Come sir, have you ever felt that love? Can *you* say—"Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee?" I think I hear many of you say "no, I have never felt that yet." Then, if you have never felt it you are still without faith in Christ; and those who are without faith in Christ are without Christ Himself.

Just let me for a few moments hold up the mirror before some of you; and as you look into it and see the character of the man without Christ reflected, may you be led to exclaim—"It is I." Here is the mirror then. The man we have attempted to describe is the man who possesses almost everything but Christ; he has *health*, and has never perhaps been laid aside a day from his work; but he is *without* Christ. He is surrounded by friends; there are many who will speak a good word for him and do a kind action; and it is his boast that he has never lost a friend he has ever made; but *he* is *without* Christ. He has respectability and good standing in society; his name would be taken anywhere for any amount; but he is *without* Christ. Number up all his possessions—count up the sum total—he has this and that, and the others; but in all his possessions he has not Christ. Oh, my brother and sister, let me ask you now, not as a minister—put that thought out of your mind—but as one who thinks he has got Christ—have you among your possessions, a *Saviour?* When you lay your head upon the pillow, can you say, I have not only this and that, not only a loving wife and dear children, and a happy home, and the various comforts of this life; but best of all, I have got my Saviour. Can you say, I fall asleep this night with a Saviour in my arms? There you have (would that I could put it far better) the character described. A man not perhaps without a knowledge of Christ, not without a certain respect for Christ, not without (God forbid that it should be so) the name of Christ, but one that has never trusted Christ—does not love Christ; and amongst all his possessions, cannot truthfully say that he has his Christ.

And now may the Holy Spirit help mightily whilst for a few minutes we try to show *the horror of this state.* God is our witness that if we try to show you the blackness of the picture, it is only that we may cause you to see your unhappy state and flee from it. From no mere love of the horrible do we dwell upon it. "Without Christ." This is indeed a dreadful "without," a want that no tongue can properly describe. There are many things thousands of us are compelled to dispense with, without our being actually one whit the less happy or one iota the worse off. But to "want" Christ is an awful want, one for which the possession of the universe would be a poor and despicable compensation. Thou dost not perhaps yet feel it so, but the time is fast coming when the hour will chime in which you would be perfectly willing to throw to the winds all that you ever had if you could say, "I have Christ." If thou hast not Christ, remember thou hast *no hope of salvation.* There is no other way of salvation but by Christ. If you are without Him, you are without the only one who can bring you to heaven; if you are without Christ you are without the only passport that will cause the pearly gates to be thrown open to you. Let me show you what I mean by an illustration. There is a man yonder who having fallen overboard is battling for dear life with

the deep green waves. A rope is flung to him—he sees it—believes it is strong enough to bear him—but never lays hold upon it. All he wants to save him is union with the rope, and *that* he has not, so with a gurgle in his throat, he sinks like lead in the waters. What the want of that rope was to the man, the want of Christ is to the sinner. I see there are many sailors here to-night, and we rejoice to behold them. Come, my sailor friends, let us try and put the truth of what we are saying before you in such a way as you will understand. A terrific storm is raging out to sea; the billows run mountains high, with crested heads; and above, the scud drives before the gale with racehorse speed; whilst all other sounds are drowned in the tumult of the great ocean clapping its thousand hands. But see, amid the waves, there is a vessel labouring in distress, and driving on a lee shore. The sails have been split to ribbons, and the masts bend and break and go overboard; the helm is unshipped, and they spring a leak. The helpless hulk begins to fill fast, and as she drifts sinks deeper—deeper and deeper. Hark!! there is a shout heard—it is the life-boat being launched. See how she ploughs her way through the boiling surf, and like a bird on the wing makes straight for the sinking crew. One after another leaps from the foundering vessel amid the shouts of the multitude who line the shore. There are but two more left upon the deck now to be saved, when a huge, hissing billow sweeps the life-boat from the side, and in that moment the fast sinking ship goes stern first down into the deep, and leaves nothing but a plank or two to mark the spot. The two men without the life-boat perished—the rest were saved. So is there no hope of salvation for the man who is "without Christ."

To be without Christ is to be *without the only thing that can satisfy the heart.*

There is no satisfaction in the things of earth. Let the thirsty man drink the sea water, and when it slakes his thirst it will be time enough for you to expect the world to satisfy you. An old writer says "man's heart being a triangle can never be filled by a round world, there will always be some empty corners left." Are there not some here this evening who have learned by bitter experience the truthfulness of this statement. The soul's restlessness until it finds the Saviour has been well described by another of the "Fathers" in language something like the following: "The needle's point in the mariner's compass never rests but quivers and shakes till it come right against the North Pole." The wise men of the east never stood still, till they were right under the star which appeared unto them; and the star itself never stood still till it came right against that other Star which shone more brightly in the manger than the sun did in the firmament. And Noah's dove could find no rest for the sole of her foot all the while she was fluttering over the flood till she returned to the ark with an olive branch in her mouth. So the heart which should be Jesu's turtle-dove can find no rest until with the silver wings of faith it fly to the true Noah which signifieth *Rest*, till Christ put forth his hand out of the ark and taking it in, receive it to Himself. But alas, the man "without Christ" is

the needle without a pole; a fluttering, weary, mourning dove, with no ark of rest to fly unto.

To be without Christ is to be without *the only solace that will make for the loss of all beside.* A man who has Christ, can never be poor, nor want a subject for a song.

"Though vine nor fig tree neither
Their wonted fruit should bear
Though all the fields should wither,
Nor flocks nor herds be there;
Yet God the same abiding,
His praise shall tune my voice;
For while in Him confiding,
I cannot but rejoice."

To have Him is to have a portion that can be robbed by none. In the time of the Marian persecution, there was a gracious woman, who being brought before bloody Bonner, was threatened by him that he would take away her husband. Saith she, "Christ is my husband." "I will take away thy child" he replied. "Christ," saith she, "is better to me than ten sons." "I will strip thee," saith he, "of all thy outward comforts." "Yea, but Christ is mine," saith she, "and you cannot strip me of him." The answer of Basil was as good, "you may take away my life, but you cannot take away my comfort; you may remove my head, but not my crown." Noble replies these, given birth to by a possessed Christ. But the man that is without Christ, is without any true wealth, whatever earthly possessions he may have; the poorest child of God is better off than he. Said a gentleman to his friend as he was showing him over his estate, "Do you see that farm yonder?" "Yes." "Well, that is mine." "Do you see that house?" "Yes." "That is mine, also." "Do you see that plantation?" "Yes." "That too, is mine." "Do you see that meadow yonder?" "Yes." "Well, that belongs to me beside." The friend, who was a christian, answered, "Do you see yonder village—do you see that house with the little gable?" "Yes." "Well, there is a lowly woman living there, so wealthy, who has far more than you altogether." "How is that?" "Why, that poor woman can say, *Christ is mine*; and he that has Christ, has more than all the world massed together." But alas, there are some here who, up to this evening, have not this great possession, that in itself is boundless wealth, for they are *without* Christ. And now in order, in some humble measure, to grasp the horror of the position, let us look at the man in four different aspects. Look at the man bereft of everything. Yonder is a man who once had all the comforts which a moderate income could command; he is compelled to remove from house to house, each lower in rent than the last. I mark the man as he goes down step by step with pity; see now how seedily he appears as he walks the streets. He hardly knows how to find bread for the children; his heart is well nigh broken as he thinks of the happy days he once enjoyed; and still down, down he goes, and perhaps other men rise to fortune by treading him still lower in the dust. And now as he looks round at his shattered fortune, what has the man to fly to for solace? Nothing! For worst of all he is *without* Christ. Had he but Christ he could say with the nobleman, "When I had all, I found my God in

all, but now I have nothing, I find my all in God." But a man without earthly comforts and without Christ is in a piteous state indeed.

Let us look at the man without Christ in another aspect; at the period when he has to *die*. I see him as he trembles at the water's brink—those waters that run so still and strong, so deep and dark. An unseen power pushes the man forward; do you mark how he shrinks back? "The world," as Queen Elizabeth said, "the world I will give for half-an-hour of life." The man is pushed on and on, and just as the waters rise to his lips there is this one horrid thought which haunts him like a nightmare, "I *must* die, and I am *without* Christ." Follow the man to the judgment bar of God, and then you will know what it is to be without Christ. The blast of the archangel's trumpet fills his heart with terror, and as the Judge's eye fixes itself upon the trembling wretch a shriek escapes his lips, "Mountains, fall upon me; hills, cover me! Why? Because the man feels "I stand before the great white throne, and—O horror—*I am without Christ.*"

Friends, I ask you in all candour—can YOU bear the thought of a judgment day without Christ?

Last of all, follow the man in imagination *throughout eternity*. Age after age passes, and yet without Christ. Perdition, but no Christ. Methinks the bitterest drop in the cup of the lost is this—that for ever and for ever they are to be *without* Christ. Canst thou, my friend, bear the thought of never having a glimpse of Jesus, never seeing the countenance of Him who is the joy of many of our hearts, and the subject of every angel's song? God knows, as I turned down the road leading to this chapel and beheld you pouring along in such a black stream, there was one question that kept recurring to me over and over again; it was this—"Great God, how many in this multitude are *now* without Christ?" How many of those who are now trooping into that tabernacle will be without Christ when they die—be without Christ when the judgment day has dawned, and be without Christ as the eternal ages roll? O! for thy soul's sake, friend, thou canst not—thou durst not be without Christ longer. Listen but to this truth—Christ is willing to be thine to night—yes, to night. Lift up thine eye and cry, "Lord Jesus, I have been without Thee, alas, too long, and now, in this sanctuary, as a poor, lost rebel sinner, I accept Thee to be my only Saviour."

The Lord grant that some of you who came in here *without* Christ, may go to your homes with Christ. The Lord grant it for Jesus' sake.—Amen.

Scripture Read, Ephesians II.
Hymns sung from "Our own Hymn Book."—386, 574, 606.

We acknowledge, with gratitude (as requested,) the sum of £1 towards our New Tabernacle from T. J. H. (Fulham.) Will other readers kindly follow this example. Donations, however small, most thankfully received by A. G. BROWN, 53, Bancroft Road, Mile End Road.

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DO NOT HURT THE CHILD!

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 10TH, 1870, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Do not sin against the Child."—GENESIS xlii, 22.

MOSES proclaimed a great truth in the ears of the Israelites, when he warned them to be sure their sin would find them out. However long the period after the committal of the crime, the hour is sure at last to come when the sinner and his sin will be brought face to face. Days, weeks, months, yea, even years, may glide by, until the sin itself almost becomes forgotten, when lo, some unlooked for and unforeseen circumstance calls up the crime from the oblivion of the past, and makes the guilty sinner tremble in its presence. We have an illustration of this truth in the chapter from which I have selected my text. Full twenty years had passed since the lad Joseph was sold by his inhuman brothers to the passing Ishmaelites. During those years the stingings of conscience which at first followed the unnatural deed had doubtless grown less and less, until by oft repetition of the lie, they had almost become persuaded it was true that "one of them was not." His death was taken for granted, and considered a certainty, and the whole matter had for a long time ceased to occupy their thoughts. But now that the twenty years have passed away, there comes a grievous famine in the land of Canaan. In utter despair, "they look one upon another" as men bereft of all energy, and without the heart to put forth any fresh efforts for help. Just at this juncture the news reaches them that there is "corn in Egypt." At the earnest request of their aged father they lose no time in journeying there, only too glad of having a chance to exchange some of the patriarch's wealth for the golden grain. Entering into an Egyptian palace they are introduced to the governor, who, though arrayed in the garments of the country must, I think, have carried in his countenance some traces of his Hebrew descent. Humbly they prostrate themselves before him, and give him deepest homage. Their overtures are received in an apparently ungracious manner, and rough words are all they receive. Charged with being spies, they are all placed in prison for three days, and then only permitted to depart by leaving one of their number as a hostage that they would return with their youngest brother. This stern discipline is beneficial to them, and awakens their sleeping consciences to the crime long since committed. Again there rises up to view a poor, pale youthful face, convulsed with the agony of fear as it descends into the darkness of the pit. Again there rings in their ears the childish cry of terror as the boy after a short but desperate struggle is dragged off by the ferocious visaged slave dealers.

The whole scene passes before them like a panorama, and with the vividness of a yesterday's transaction.

Their sin has found them out, and trembling with self-condemnation, they confess "we are verily guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Their sense of guilt is now increased by Reuben reminding them that they had sinned in spite of his entreaty and warning. "Spake I not unto you," saying, "Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold also his blood is required." Perhaps there are some of you now thinking "What has this subject to do with our Sunday School Anniversary?" I answer, much, for this reason. There are many ways of sinning against a child besides letting him down into a pit, or selling him to passing Ishmaelites. My desire is not so much to speak this morning to the dear little ones in the galleries (they will have their turn in the afternoon) as to those of you who are parents and teachers, or have any influence whatsoever over children. To such the text should come home with power. "Do not sin against the child." We will try and look at this subject in two ways, namely—*Several ways in which we may sin against a child*, and secondly—*Special reasons why we should not.*

I. How may we sin against a child?

We may sin against a child first of all by *spoiling him.* This great mistake is to be as much dreaded as over severity, for it would, I think, be a difficult matter to determine which of the two evils has produced the greatest amount of sorrowful fruit—foolish indulgence, or excessive severity. Certainly the former sin is the one most easily fallen into. All the instincts of a father's and mother's heart give a bias toward it. It is so natural to see nothing wrong in *our own* children—so easy to be lenient to our own flesh and blood. For the sin we so readily condemn in the children of others we make a thousand excuses when beheld in our own. Nothing is harder than to say, "no," to the request of the little lips that press our own, or to reprove and restrict the darling who has entwined round about his little form our tenderest heart-strings. To be continually clipping the tree is doubtless a bad thing for its full development; but to leave it untouched and allow it to straggle any way and every way in wild luxuriance is just as great if not a greater evil. I will use another illustration that I think many of our little friends in the gallery will understand. If the peach trees and plum trees that are nailed to the garden walls by a hundred little pieces of cloth could but think and speak, they might very likely say to the gardener so busily at work with the hammer—"Why fasten us up like this, and forbid our beautiful branches from running on the ground or playing in the breeze. How unkind it is to put so many restraints upon us and leave us so little liberty; let us just for this season run over the wall, along by the wall, or away from the wall, or any way we please." But the gardener with a smile would reply, "It is out of kindness I do it, not from mere caprice. Wait until the spring has glided into summer, and all thy branches are decked with snowy bloom. Wait until the summer has mellowed into

autumn, and then when thy boughs are laden with fruit, which *they never could have borne but for these restrictions*, then you will see, that all has been done for thy good and to make thy fruit the richer." So beloved parents, out of very kindness to the child you must sometimes say, "No," and place restrictions on him. The child untrained in its spring time will bear but little fruit in the autumn of its life, and it is no true love to allow its autumn to be blasted in order to satisfy the whims of its foolish spring.

Multitudes of children who might have grown up to be solaces to the heart of their mother and the joy of their father have been utterly sacrificed at the altar of this *effeminate idol.* Scripture abounds with examples of this sin against the child. Look at Eli, the kind-hearted high priest. Who would dare to question his piety or doubt the genuineness of his love to his children. He loved them, if not too well, too foolishly, for "he restrained not his sons." What was the consequence? The priesthood was for ever wrested from his family—his sons met with an untimely death, and the fond parent with broken heart fell down and broke his neck. Behold another sorrowful example in David, the "man after God's own heart." He who in his youthful days could meet a Goliath with unfearing heart—who all his lifetime was a man of war, and ruled with masterly hand a turbulent nation, was yet unable to rule his own family. The indulgent King allowed his children to run as wild as the flowing locks of his favorite son, and the result was as fatal. View him as with staggering steps he ascends yon turret staircase, crying out in the bitterness of his heart. "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son." That anguish of the monarch's heart may all be traced back to the fact that in foolish indulgence he had sinned against the child. Truer words were never uttered than those of Solomon's "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."

There is a second way in which you may sin against a child, the very reverse of that just mentioned, and it is *by harshness.* There is no need to say to some parents "do not spoil the child," if you mean by the word "spoil" over indulgence. Over indulge a child! Not they, for they never indulge him at all. Spoil him through excessive liberty! No chance of *that*, for the poor little thing has never yet learnt what liberty means. Its only idea of a parent is that of a walking iceberg—a being who never opens its lips except to assert its authority or maintain its *dignity*—a being whose sole powers of oratory consist in saying with a harsh grating voice that sets the soul of the little one on edge, "He means to be master in his own house." If such a deluded specimen of parental love be here this morning, I would say to him, "My friend, you may sin just as much against your child by your wicked harshness as the other by his foolish indulgence; and there is this to be said about his sin which cannot be said of yours, 'it is a natural one.'" There are many of childhood's ways which though troublesome to us, are not sinful in them. The very buoyancy of health and spirits is often the only crime, and it does seem hard to condemn the little one for *that.* Who among us has not now rising to view some chubby faced, rosy cheeked, laughing eyed youngster, who

always seems to choose the moment of our greatest depression for his most riotous exhibition of fun—the little one who with a pretty shake of the head seems to bid defiance to our putting on the curb—the little one who in reckless glee will force his way into our study or private room, turn summersaults over our books, kick our well assorted papers to the four points of the compass, and then turn special pleader and in English spoken backwards, defend his case, and like an April day take it in turns to smile and cry? Why we have all *seen* some such happy, troublesome little creature, and many of us *have* him. How are we to treat his wild escapades? Are we to lecture him and frown upon him as if he had broken all the ten commandments in ten minutes? Yes, if we wish to sin against the child but not otherwise. *God never meant little children to walk demurely about in straight jackets.* You may perhaps succeed in placing upon very young shoulders a very old and a very silly head, but in so doing, you will, in all probability, give the child a heart disease for life. Do let their young spirits alone so long as there is no actual sin involved. God knows they will want in years to come all they possess and meet with plenty to knock them out of them without your assistance in childhood. You may break a child's spirit, but there is one thing you can never do, and that is *mend it.* You may by over harshness crush the bounding heart, but believe me the day will come, when you would be willing to give anything to restore the elasticity of soul that once annoyed you so. Guide the sparkling foaming torrent if you will, and turn it in a right direction; but if you have any love for your child do not dam it up. Never mind if their noise does "go through your head," it will come out the other side, and if it remains there, better that than that your frown should abide in their heart.

A third way of sinning against a child is by *bad example.* The ancient Romans had a custom which I think in many respects was a good one. They placed the busts of their distinguished ancestors in the vestibules of their houses in the hope that their children, by often gazing upon them, might have an ambition fired in their breast to follow the virtues for which they were celebrated. We have not the marble busts of departed ones in our halls, but we have that which is far more potent over children, I mean the characters of the living, and narrowly are they watched. It is Gilfillan who remarks that "any fault in a parent, any inconsistency, any disproportion between profession and practice, or precept and practice, falls upon the child's eye with *the force and precision of sunbeams on a daguerreotype plate.*" On what other ground can you account for the awful proficiency in sin which you find in many a little one? Have you never had your heart made to ache as you have walked some of our streets and heard "little tots" bring out an oath as big as themselves? Where did they learn it? Is it natural to a child to swear? The answer is, "they learn the black art in their own homes. They are only the tiny echoes of their father's voice, and he has sinned against the child. We have need not only to repent of our own sins, but also of those committed by others through our example. Good Thomas Fuller used often to utter the following quaint but admirable prayer, "Lord, I trust Thou hast

pardoned the bad examples I have set before others; be also pleased to pardon me the sins which they have committed by my bad examples. If Thou hast forgiven my own sins, the children of my corrupt nature forgive me, my grandchildren also. Let not the transcripts remain, since Thou hast blotted out the original." You profess, dear friend, to be a christian, and your child knows you are a member of this Church. He has seen you partake of the Lord's supper, and then, when you have gone home, he has in a moment detected the discrepancy between the profession of the sanctuary and the life of the home. The hasty temper—the selfish spirit—the covetous conversation—all these have been so many sins against the child. Oh, how dreadful the thought that by our own lives we may be sinning against the little darlings we often feel we could die for. God forbid, that at the last great day any of our children should turn to us with blanched cheek and say, "Father or mother, if I am damned it is by copying the example you placed before me."

There is a fourth way of sinning against a child which I do not for a moment suppose is followed by any present. But as this discourse will in all probability reach a far larger congregation than the one assembled here, I will just indicate it. It is *by selling a child for gain.* Would that my Master might enable me to express in language strong enough the indignant thoughts that burn within my breast concerning this miserable traffic in children's souls. Joseph is not the only child that has been sold for a few pieces of silver. In free and freedom-loving England children are as relentlessly knocked down to the highest bidder as ever they were in the slave states of America. Do you ask me what I mean and to what I refer? I answer to the thoughtless wicked practice of setting the child to any kind of work, and placing him amidst any kind of companionship so as to have the benefit of the few pence he may earn. Better starve without it than live by it, for it is nothing less than blood money. Have you never seen the child that is scarcely more than an infant trotted up and down our streets to gather a few pennies by singing some sweet hymn of heaven? Have you ever marked the sanctimonious face of the parent as he pockets every few minutes the coppers brought him by the little one? A pretty school indeed for a young heart. No wonder if in years to come he makes hypocrisy his trade—he was apprenticed to it. He has been as deliberately sold as ever Joseph was. But there are more polite ways of doing the same thing. It is a crying sin against a child to place him in some hot bed of temptation in order to "get him off our hands." It is a cruel act to allow the little one to dwell from morning to night in an atmosphere that reeks with vice in order to pocket the paltry pittance earned by its tiny fingers. Let not the money tempt you, your child's innocence is worth more than *that.* Rather go without the crust than purchase it at the cost of your child's soul.

Our next point is one that will, I doubt not, include many present. You may sin against the child by *neglecting the means for its salvation.* Do you pray for the conversion of your children with the same intensity of desire as when you ask for their temporal well-being. When last summer your little one was laid low with fever, and you feared that

only the icy hand of death would ever cool its burning brow—how you prayed then—why the drops stood upon your face like beads through the anguish of your soul. Have you ever prayed like *that* for its salvation, or have you to confess before the Lord that the eternal interests of your children find but a small space in your prayers? O sin not so against the child—he is *worth* praying for. What are you doing to try and bring them to Jesus? Do you ever, with the tear in your eye, tell them of the love of Jesus, or do you think they are too young for that? Have you ever tried to show them their need of a Saviour, and pointed them to Him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me?" These are solemn questions, for I say to you dear parents in all love and from the very depths of my heart, "If you neglect the means for bringing your little ones to Christ, you are sinning against the child, and his blood will be required of you." O friends it is a crying shame, that in our prayer meetings there are to be found men who pray as if they were dying to see the world converted and yet never pray for their own children. It is a sad sad fact that there are many who seem wonderously in earnest about the conversion of strangers, who yet let their own children go to perdition without a warning or entreaty. "But," one replies, (and it is a very general answer) "I mean to teach my children when they have attained to years of discretion." That is what a lady once said in self-defence to Archbishop Sharpe. "Madam," replied the shrewd prelate. "If you do not teach them the devil will." The devil begins at dawn of day to sow the tare seed; be not behind him in scattering the seed of the kingdom.

Try all means, at all times, in all ways, for their conversion, lest by neglect you sin against the child. And now lastly on this point, and only for a minute or two, we may sin against a child by *showing indifference to its early impressions.* I know I am here taking ground disputed by many; people who seem to take a delight in pooh-poohing the idea of a child's conversion. The tear that trickles down the little cheek is according to them only the result of excitement, and no cause for thankfulness. The early anguish about sin is something that ought to be discouraged, "as they cannot possibly know anything about it." Where do we read so in the word? "For of such is the kingdom of heaven," I read, but to suit these folks it should run, "for *not* of such, &c." Depend upon it, a child must be marvellously young to be beyond the power of divine grace. A child's sorrow for sin, and anxiety after a Saviour, are just as real and often more sincere than the adult's. Turn not away with an unbelieving sneer when some little one tells you of its anguish, lest at last with bitterness of soul you have to say in the language of the verse, "we saw the anguish of our brother when he besought us and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." There are many other ways of sinning against a child beside those we have already mentioned, but we forbear mentioning them as time warns us. So let us to the second point.

II. THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY WE SHOULD NOT SIN AGAINST THE CHILD. Sin not against him, because *he* IS *a child.* If you must sin against some one, sin against one of your own

size and strength, but it is a dastardly thing and cowardly to sin against a child. The little thing's innocence ought to be its safeguard, and its very weakness should prove its protection. If white locks call for reverence, little ringlets also demand respect, and you will generally find that by all great minds it is willingly given. Nearly four hundred years ago there lived in Germany a worthy schoolmaster whose name was John Trebonius; he was rather of an eccentric character, and in himself a perfect original. The world, however, needed then as it does now men of that stamp, so the statement detracts nothing from his worth. He had, among other eccentricities, the strange custom of always raising his hat when he entered the school room, and teaching the boys bare-headed for, said he, "Who can tell what may yet rise up from amid these youths. There may be among them in the bud, future learned doctors, sage philosophers, nay, even princes of the empire." Far seeing teacher he! and high the honour God placed on him, for among the lads there was one named Martin Luther, who, in after years, was known as "the solitary monk that shook the world." Because thou knowest not what the child may become, let his very childhood say to you, "sin not against him."

Sin not against the child, because *by so doing you may blast his whole life.* We have but one life here, and it is a melancholy thing for that to be a blasted one. Who of us that are parents can dare to contemplate the lives of any of our children being useless and withered. Much as we love them, we would rather follow them in their infancy to the open grave. And yet such a thing is possible. By some evil example seen by them in early life an impression may be made upon their souls, the effects of which will remain to their dying day. You may with your foot so alter the course of that tiny little mountain rivulet that instead of flowing gently down and widening as it goes until it glides through the smiling valley refreshing thirsty man and beast, it leaps from rock to rock, from crag to crag, falling at last with hideous roar down some black precipice. Oh, the fatal result of turning its course so near the spring. Let us remember beloved that a look, a word, an action may have the same effect upon any of the little streamlets beneath our roofs.

Do not sin moreover against the child because *children are Christ's favorites.* He ever showed a peculiar sympathy with and care over children. Never was a word derogatory of a child heard to drop from his lips, but often did he point to it as the disciples' example. The great and good shepherd seemed to have a peculiar solicitude about the welfare of his "lambs." That he does love children with something like a special love is seen I think in the fact that *He takes so many of them to Himself.* I think our Lord meant something more than is generally supposed when he uttered the sweet words "For of such is the kingdom of heaven." I know it is usually thought to teach the childlike nature of the christian; but may it not also have this interpretation? "Do not forbid the children coming to me here on earth, for I am always receiving them in heaven. There they are to be found in such countless numbers that they form the majority of its inhabitants." Doubtless, there are many parents present who have known the grief of having the loved ones snatched

from their arms. Cheer up sad heart; you have only lost them, because, much as you loved them, Jesus loved them better still. May he not take from his garden some of the opening flowers with the dew of youth still upon them, as well as those which have already become faded and commenced to fall? Surely he has a right to the very best and sweetest of them all.

There is a reaper whose name is Death,
And with his sickle keen;
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,
And the flowers that grow between.

"The Lord hath need of these flowrets gay"
The reaper said and smiled.
Dear tokens of the earth are they,
Where He was once a child.

And the mother gave in tears and pain
The flowers she most did love;
She knew she could have them all again
In the fields of light above.

Oh! not in cruelty, not in wrath,
The reaper came that day;
'Twas an angel visited the green earth,
And took the flowers away.

I close with this remark. Do not sin against the child, *because Christ's praise is perfected by them.* When the disciples were anxious to silence the singing crowd of little ones, you will remember they received the rebuke from the Master. "Have ye not read—out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" And has it not ever been so. Has not Jesus often received the most perfect praise from childhood's lips? When proud Pharisees and contemptuous Scribes looked on our Lord with silent scorn, who was it that gave him his rightful praise? Why the children. Early church history gives many an illustration of the same truth. When Mr. Laurence was burned at Colchester, Fox tells us in his Book of Martyrs, that young children came around the fire and cried, "Lord, strengthen thy servant and fulfil thy promise." When that eminent Scotch martyr, Mr. Wishart, was accused by a Popish chaplain of having a devil in him, it was a child who called out—"a devil could not speak such words as I have heard that man utter." Later on we have another beautiful illustration in the case of George Whitfield, who in a postscrpt to one of his letters, in which he details his persecution when first preaching in Moorfields, says, "I cannot help adding that several little boys and girls, who were fond of sitting round me on the pulpit while I preached, and handed to me the people's notes—though they were often pelted with eggs, dirt, &c. thrown at me—never once gave way; but on the contrary, every time I was struck, turned up their little weeping eyes, and seemed to wish they could receive the blows for me. God make them in their growing years, great and living martyrs for Him who, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings perfects praise."

Does Christ put so high an honour upon children as often to commit His praise to their keeping, then let us indeed beware lest in any way we sin against a child. The Lord bless this discourse to all parents, teachers, and friends of children for his name's sake—Amen.

Scripture Read- Genesis xlii chap. to 23rd verse.
Special Hymns sung by the children.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

BETTER THAN ALL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 1ST, 1870, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"What *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved, O, thou fairest among women? What *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved, that thou dost so charge us."—SONG OF SOLOMON, v—9

O, how willing is our Jesus to hear the prayers of his people and respond to their call. His delight is to fulfil their desires and satisfy their longings. No weariness is it to Him to listen to their sorrows and give ear to their complaints. Yea, his ear is more ready to drink in our words than are our lips to utter them. He places no restrictions on our approaches to His throne, nor does He utter a syllable to damp our ardour or chill us in our intercourse. On the contrary, He is lavish in His invites and endearing in His encouragements, and does His very utmost to draw out our hearts' deepest secret. His language to fearing souls who tremble to draw nigh is "let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely." How swift is He moreover, not only to hear but to answer —He waits to be gracious. In our Jesus we have no Baal, who being on a journey, is unable to hear the frantic cries of his worshippers, though they cry from early morning until dewy eve. In Him we have no Diana, who, according to ancient mythology, was unable to prevent the burning of her temple, owing to the necessity of her being at the birth of one of this world's great ones. He is always near His own, and ever ready to succour them in seasons of distress. There are no times when we may not draw nigh to Him. Every day, every hour of the day, and every minute of every hour is "a time when Thou mayst be found."

The ancients used to represent their heathen god, Jupiter, as looking at certain seasons through the chinks of heaven's floor; whoever then happened to address his prayers might hope for an audience, but not otherwise. But our God—Jehovah Jesus—is ever viewing his people, and straining his ear of love to catch their faintest whispers. We have a very beautiful illustration of our Saviour's readiness to answer the request of his chosen ones, in the commencement of the chapter from which I have selected this evening's text. The church has just given utterance to the fervent desire, that her beloved should come and walk in His garden and eat of His pleasant fruits, or in other words, favor her with His company and bless her with communion, when lo, no sooner have the words escaped her lips, than the voice of the heavenly bridegroom replies, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse." Rapid was the response to the invite, but not more rapid than the change that had taken place in the church's

experience. In order to understand the full meaning of the words of our text, let us recount the history.

After the church had given her Lord the invite to communion, a spirit of drowsiness settles down upon her, and, alas, who among us has not often found so sad and sudden a transition of experience to be his own. She asks for her Beloved to come, but when He does, how cold is the reception He meets, "I sleep, but my heart waketh."

She has laid herself down upon the couch of carnal sloth, and is unprepared to receive her invited guest. Drowsy though she is, she is not in the sleep of spiritual death, for she is sufficiently awake to know the voice that calls her. It is, she says, "the voice of *my* beloved," but she is too slothful to arise and let the heavenly bridegroom in. Full of infinite tenderness and boundless compassion, the slighted guest turns not away in indignant wrath, as he might so justly and righteously have done; but behold, He knocks at the closed door, and in a voice of mingled love and grief, urges his claim for admittance in the plaintive language of the second verse, "Open to me, my sister, my love, for my head is filled with dew and my locks with the drops of night." O, lovely picture! Do you not see it, beloved? There on the couch is the slumbering church—wretched in her drowsiness. There the closed door. Outside, knocking and quietly waiting stands One with a countenance, beautiful beyond all description in love and grief. A heavy mist wreaths every thing around with a silvery mantle, and causes those flowing locks, which are black and bushy as a raven, to drip with the night dew. All is cold, damp and cheerless, and there are but few who have not sought the shelter of their homes, and those few are hastening there. He knocks again! Ah! listen to the answer that follows that quiet knock. "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"

Surely she must be acting on the old adage, "that a bad excuse is better than none at all." Poorer excuses for keeping her Lord in the night damp can hardly be imagined. Suppose thou hast put off thy coat, is it an impossibility to put it on again O, sleepy soul? Though thou hast washed thy feet, will not an embrace from the Beloved more than make amends for their defilement? As with her so it is with us. When the soul is in a lethargic state, a straw, a pebble, a cob-web, a mere nothing will seem an inseparable barrier, when at other times an Alpine mount will appear but a hillock over which the happy spirit skips.

With a love unabated by these rebuffs, the bridegroom puts in his hand by the hole of the door, and at the same moment lifts the latch of her heart. It is enough. The drowsiness departs. Old desires awaken. A dying love becomes inflamed. She springs from her bed to the door. The coat is forgotton and the washed feet unthought of. With nervous haste, she opens wide the door, when, O, horror, nothing but the gloom of night is seen. Her beloved has withdrawn Himself. Our Saviour chastens us for our coldness to Him when He invites us, by hiding Himself, when with repentant hearts we seek Him. Such base ingratitude will ever bring its own punishment. Seeing how little we prize His company, He withdraws Himself for a season to endear to us His companionship. We never know how much we need a Saviour's presence until we lack it. This

absence does indeed make the heart grow fond. Overwhelmed with dismay, her soul fainted and through her sorrow she swooned. With what bitter self-reproaching does she now load herself. With what wringing anguish does she think of Him standing in the falling dew whilst she was framing her miserable excuses. And now He has gone, and she cannot even tell Him how vehemently she hates her sloth. She feels she has grieved Him. Him who has ever been so kind. Him for whose company she asked. What can she do? What shall she do? Retire to rest again? No that were *now* an impossibility. Find Him she *must*. Cast herself at His feet she must, if it only be to sob out her broken hearted confessions of sin. I think I see her, as with wild distracting grief she hurries from her house into the deserted streets. In an agony, she cries out and calls, "My Beloved, My Beloved," but receiving no answer but the empty echo, she runs from street to street, up this one and down that one, in the hope she may meet her Lord. She met Him not, but I read she met the watchmen that went about the city, who smote her and wounded her. Who these watchmen represent is not agreed upon, some think they are the ministers of the Gospel—Zion's watchmen; and others that they represent false teachers in the church. I am inclined to go with the first interpretation, and then I think the teaching is very clear. Mourning an absent Lord, the soul goes to the sanctuary in the hope that there it may find Him, but instead of doing so, the preacher is led of the spirit to utter such truths, that sorrow of soul is only increased. He reminds it of its previous slothfulness; shows it the sin in darker colours than ever; dwells upon the unkindness of the past. Word after word smites home, and almost every sentence wounds. This is only needful discipline, and the preacher may have been as much under the guidance of the Master as when his whole sermon was a "Comfort ye, Comfort ye."

But now what is the poor, desponding, weeping soul to do. She has traversed every street, and her voice is hoarse with calling, whilst every limb aches with the blows the watchmen gave her. A happy thought occurs to her. If she cannot find the Lord others may, if He hides his face from her He may reveal it unto others, who are "daughters of Jerusalem," then she will ask them to tell her Lord how she longs for His presence, and how she repents her previous sloth. "I charge you, O, daughters of Jerusalem, if *ye* find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love." She acted in the same way that Joseph did when in prison, saying to the chief butler, who was shortly to be restored to his former high position, "think on me when it is well with thee." Ah, dear friends, it is a blessed privilege to be allowed to remember others in our prayers, and when we are full of joy, resting in the love of our Jesus, it behoves us to speak to Him on behalf of those, who are going hither and thither in search of Him. How little we can tell the amount of obligation we are under to others—perhaps humble Christians—for their prayers.

I have not an atom of faith in the so-called intercession of saints in Heaven, but I have in the prayers of God's children on earth. My heart is often made glad in seasons of despondency and gloom by the thought, that there are many of you, who I know bear me up constantly in your prayers, and God only knows how large a proportion of the great blessing we have now received for so long a time is in answer to

the fervent cries of some of the humblest members of this church. Beloved, I still crave the boon of your prayers. When you are near to your Saviour, remember me. When you have found Him, after a season of loneliness, tell Him that I and hundreds more of his saints are longing and panting for more of his presence, yea, that we are sick through very love of Him. Desirous of hearing from the spouse's own lips what she thought and felt towards her Beloved, they ask her the question of our text, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved that thou dost so charge us," or in other words, "What is there so preeminently lovely in the one you seek that you give us so solemn a charge?" The question stirs her heart to its deepest depth, and in the rhetoric of love she pours forth the glowing description of her Saviour, which forms the closing portion of this chapter. My subject this evening is, you will perceive, the incomparable excellence of Christ over every other beloved. May our Lord make it to each and all of us a sweet preparation for sitting around His table. We will, in the first place, for a few moments observe that ALL HAVE SOME BELOVED, and then secondly, that CHRIST SURPASSES ALL BELOVEDS.

I. First then and very briefly—ALL HAVE SOME BELOVED.

By a beloved I mean any person or anything that more than any other occupies the thoughts—entwines about itself the affections and constitutes the mainspring of the person's actions. That is a beloved on which the thoughts dwell with pleasure, but without any effort—in which our love centres with a force that affects and regulates the whole life, and which in a word *is* our life's end and our life's joy. For a man to be utterly devoid of such an experience is an impossibility. His taste may be a depraved, vitiated, senseless one; but there it is, a hideous idol, at whose shrine he offers himself. We have no time nor inclination this evening to dwell upon the multitude of beloveds found in the hearts of men. We can only just mention them and pass on, and we only mention them in order to make them a dark background on which to display the beauty and glory of Him who is, we trust, to many hundreds present their souls' best love. The beloved of many is *money*. Their thoughts can only run on golden rails. No matter what subject of meditation may be started it is sure at last to end in money. They look through its medium—they reckon by its value—they worship or pretend to, under its influence. Whatever affection they ever possessed, has been stolen by this cursed idolatry. It has eaten as a canker into all that was ever warm or generous in their hearts, and now it lives upon itself, creating an ever increasing gnawing and craving. Money is at the bottom of almost all their actions, *and for them to live is cash*. Such alas! is the chosen beloved of many. But there are others of lighter, gayer dispositions who laugh to scorn the miser's treasure and cast their offerings at the feet of *pleasure*. For *it* they live, in it they revel. If life be short, it shall at least be merry. All stern realities are put aside with a laugh, and such gloomy subjects as sickness or death are prohibited matters of conversation. The world and the things of the world constitute their beloved, and they woo it with a blind devotion. Fame—learning—position in society—self—family—friends—all these and countless others are each the beloved of thousands. Think not we have any desire to condemn all the "things beloved" we have mentioned, far from it. For whilst some are low,

grovelling and downright sinful, there are others that adorn as jewels the character of the Christian, and without which his very Christianity might well be called in question.

No, my desire is to show and feel, and make you feel that Jesus is infinitely *more* than any other, and that no other beloved can possibly be compared to Him. His excellence is such, that the anguish of losing His presence, and the anxiety to find it again, will make the believing soul a marked person, and often lead to the question, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Let us then to the sweet work of answering the question, and singing our beloved's praise.

II. CHRIST SURPASSES ALL BELOVEDS.

No question is more easily answered by the Christian than the one in the text. The most ignorant and simple-minded children of God can grow eloquent on this theme. Whatever points of theology they may know little about, they know there is no one like Christ. Their beloved is beyond all others, and they are ready at any moment to prove it. Get them on this subject, and their tongue becomes as "the pen of a ready writer," though on any other they are little better than tongue-tied. Let me then try and show you how Christ surpasses all beloveds. He does so first in *beauty*. How magnificent is the description that flows from the lips of the spouse, when she is challenged to show the superiority of her beloved. Her love lacks no rhetoric—true love very seldom does. Her whole soul is now on fire, and the flame burns all the more intensely for the remembrance of her past coldness. But now she has an opportunity of saying what she *really* thinks about her Lord, and without a moment's hesitation she pours forth a glowing eulogy on his beauty. We can but pick out two or three of her rapturous descriptions this evening, and ask you to peruse them all at your leisure. "My beloved" she exclaims, "is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." Here you have the perfection of loveliness—not merely ruddy, nor only pale, though there may be beauty in both, but white and ruddy, the rose and the lily united, the fairest contrasts meeting in the same person. O, is it not so with our Beloved? Is there any beauty to be compared to His? Cannot even we, like the spouse in the Canticles, exhaust the fairest metaphors to tell his comeliness? Her beloved *is* our beloved, and the same language describes both. Was her's white and ruddy, so is ours. Was her's the chiefest among ten thousand, so is ours.

White and ruddy! Ah, here believer, see your Lord, for who so white and ruddy as He? Who so lovely in the blended colors as He. View Him in Gethsemane's shade, trodden in the wine press of Jehovah's wrath. Mark his wan and saddened countenance pale as driven snow. Your beloved is white. But see at every pore there gathers a ruby drop—a drop of blood, and now he is robed in a garment of His gore. Your beloved is ruddy. Glance at Him again as He stands in Pilate's hall, bound with cords to yonder column. See how white and ruddy is your beloved now, as at every furious blow the crimson tide afresh pours down his back. Linger by His feet at Calvary—look into that face the eyes of which are well nigh blinded by the bloody shower falling from His thorn-crowned brow—see the mingled stream of blood and water gushing from His riven side. Your beloved is white and ruddy *now*. True, but it only adds another charm to His loveliness. Like the spouse we glory in it. "Beauteous Saviour, thy blood drops

are thy charm." And now the repentant sleeper dwells with delight upon every detail of her beloved's loveliness. She thinks of those eyes into which she has so often gazed, and which have so often returned a look of love unutterable, and at the remembrance she exclaims, "His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set."

Can we not also speak of the eyes of our beloved. Was is not *that* look of His that broke our hearts; and when with bleeding soul we ventured nigh Him and feebly cried for mercy, was it not *that* look of divine compassion and welcome pardon that sent sweet peace flowing into our soul like a river; and when like Peter we have denied Him before a scoffing world, have we not also like Peter been restored by just *one look* ot those eyes, soft and loving as a dove's. Ah, yes, there are no eyes like our Beloved's. And now having described his cheeks and locks, she pauses to think what else she can say in praise of His beauty. There is but a moment's pause and then love's rhetoric takes its highest flight and places the crown on all previous praises in the exclamation—*Yea, he is altogether lovely.*

Our beloved is more than others in that *He reciprocates my love.* That must be an inferior beloved that allows all the love to be on one side, and yet how often is it so with the beloveds chosen by many. Can gold return the love that is lavished upon it? Can *it* make any return for affection shown? No not a whit. It receives all but gives none. View the man who for years has chosen wealth as the recipient of his heart's love. View him in the hour of sorrow and bereavement when all other comforts fail. Does he find his wealth a solace? Does *it* bind up the heart that is broken? Does *it* become the good Samaritan pouring in oil and wine? Never; if you doubt it ask the men who have tried. When friends prove false, and bosom friends grow cold, does gold whisper into the ear of the embittered soul, "be comforted, *I* love thee, and will never, never forsake thee." No, it has no power to love. When the devotee of gold has to die, can his beloved stand by him *then?* Can gold

Make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are?

Can *it* speak to the ears that are deaf to every other voice? Can the dying wretch say concerning it, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for *thou* art with me, *thy* rod and *thy* staff they comfort me?" He cannot. He has wasted his heart and life's best love on that which fails him at his greatest need. His beloved is dumb when most he needs a voice. It is unconcerned and indifferent in the moment of his greatest agony. O cold-hearted wealth, thou who hast never yet returned love for love I marvel at the number of thy lovers. My beloved is more than thee. For every drop of love I have towards Him, there is in His heart an ocean full for me.

He is more than any other beloved also, because *He is never a cause of sorrow.* Can you point me to any other love that never gives a pang or brings a tear? God knows that as parents, our children are our beloved. But are not children sometimes the sharpest dagger that ever sheaths itself within the breast? In this concourse of to-night are there none who find their children their greatest trial? The greater the love the greater the grief, is too often found true in the family. Have any

of us ever had a friend who has never given us one moment's anxiety or sorrow? I think not. Earthly honey is always mixed with gall, and this world's fairest rose is ever accompanied with thorns. But Jesus is a beloved, who is all joy. His friendship is sweeter than honey, and the rose of Sharon has no thorns. I challenge my soul and yours, O, child of God, to remember a solitary moment in our Christian life, when the heart was made sad by want of faithfulness on His part, or coldness in his love. No, no, our sorrows are our own, and all our joys are His. It is confiding too little in Him, not too much, that gives us days of darkness. We never have had and we never shall have anything to fear on his part. He is always true, ever loving, never fickle and never false. O, what beloved then *can* be compared to Him?

Other beloveds may be loved too well, but Jesus never. Love to Him can never become a snare—love to Him need not and should never have any restraint. Love Him to a passion, and you will not love Him half enough. Let your love be what the world will call fanatical, and lead you to do things that it will account as madness, and it will then be but a poor dying love, unworthy of its object. O open the flood-gates of your souls, and let an unpent torrent of affection flow out that shall carry all before it. Cut every cord that would bind your love, cast aside every impediment in its course. Rest not until your love to Jesus has risen like a heavenly deluge flowing over every mountain top of earth, and then pray to love him more. He is a beloved beyond all others, and love to Him *can never be extreme.*

Our beloved is more than others *in that death robs us not of Him.* Death carries a sharp knife that severs the closest bonds of earth. The dying miser may breathe his last with the gold still in his death-grasp. But he *must* leave it—yes, every coin. The mother may strain her darling to her breast with all the strength of parental love, but death releases her hold, and takes her from her treasure. "For the present only" is written upon the brow of all earthly loves. Different far is it with our Beloved. The cold black wave that washes us away from everything on earth only washes us high up upon the heavenly shore and leaves us landed in His arms. In Him we have a treasure we take with us through the flood, or rather in Him we have a treasure *that takes us* through the stream. O, child of God, rejoice, for however poor you may appear, you have that which will make you rich to all the intents of bliss when death has stript every worldling bare, and laid in the dust every beloved he once possessed. Blessed Jesus, who can but extol Thee and exclaim "There is no beloved to be compared to Thee."

No other beloved died for me, but Jesus did. Great and wonderful are the sacrifices that have been made through love. Selfish though human nature is, there have yet been deeds of affection worthy of an angel. But how few friends have died for friends, or have even reached that point of love that would make them willing to. But I think I hear some of you say, "Where is the superiority of your beloved over others, have you not just granted that some friends have died for friends? Yes, *friends for friends.* But did you ever hear of one willingly dying for His *enemies.* Remember our Beloved loved us unto the death, not because we loved Him, but because He *would* love

us. So you will perceive that we here have love beyond that ever shown by friend to friend displayed to enemies.

Yes, blessed Jesus, thou hast written Thy love to us in letters drawn with blood. Thou standest before us this evening with scars still visible, and pointing to them, sayest, "Did any other beloved suffer such for thee"? No, Lord, No, Lord, Thou art alone in thy love. Like Thyself it is infinite, and defies all measurement in its height and depth, in its length and breadth. Concerning Thee only can I say "who loved me *and gave Himself for me.*"

And now, lastly. Our Beloved is more than any other beloved *in our estimation.* Whatever others may think of Him, to *me* He is the chiefest among ten thousand. Notice how the spouse concludes her address to the daughters of Jerusalem, in the last verse of the chapter, "this is *my* beloved, and this is *my* friend." It is only those who have not Christ that see no beauty in him. It is only the mere professor who places the Lord on an equality with other beloveds. The true saint—the one who can say "this is *my* beloved," will allow of no comparison, a holy jealousy fills his heart, and he counts the dearest thing that would usurp his Lord's position in his heart as an accursed idol. The sad reason why so many of you present are unable to understand the rapturous love of the saint to his Saviour is because you are unable to say "He is *my* friend." Once learn to say that with truth and you will no longer marvel, but join us in our song of praise.

I will now conclude with just these few practical words. If Jesus be all that he is described in this sweet chapter—and we know He is—let us give Him a love in some small measure worthy of his excellence. Let us hang down our heads with shame, as we remember how cold and formal we have been with *such* a beloved, and whilst we do so let there be a fresh dedication on the part of us all, to Him who is so peerless in His love and beauty. Is there a child of God present who through past slothfulness is now mourning an absent Christ? Oh go dear friend into the streets of Jerusalem and cry after Him. Yea that is what I know thou art doing now. Then cheer up. He is not far from thee. He only hideth Himself behind thy wall. He sees thy tears—He hears thy sobs—He knows thou art sick of love—and soon will He come and take thee into his banqueting house under his flowing banner of love.

Poor sinner, I want *you* to fall in love with Jesus, I desire (as holy Rutherford used to express it) to make a marriage between thy soul and Him—to woo thee to his arms. What are thy present beloveds to Him? What satisfaction hast thou found in them? How long canst thou keep them? O turn thy back upon them and look into the face of Jesus, and say "O Saviour, from this evening I accept Thee as *my* Saviour. I take Thee as Thou dost so freely offer Thyself. Thou art and ever shall be *my* Beloved. "God help you to for Christ's sake—Amen.

Scripture Read—Psalm 31.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—413—786—793.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 26TH, 1870, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"But none saith, Where *is* God my maker, who giveth songs in the night.—JOB xxxv—10.

IT is impossible to doubt that this world is a world of sorrow. Go where you will and wander never so far, you still find yourself unable to get beyond the region of grief. Like the atmosphere it bounds everything; and it is a hopeless task to endeavour to get without its circle. You will find it giving a saddened tone to conversation; leaving its mark and impress upon the face of man, and driving its deep furrow across his brow. It finds its way into the heart, and also steals within the home, for there is not a homestead in England or the wide world over, but what has sometimes had the shadow of grief cast across its threshold. The noise of a great city frightens it not away, nor does the calm and quiet of a country village afford any protection from its entrance. Although we here this morning differ in many respects, yet in one thing we all agree: "every heart knoweth its own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy." We care not how old or how young the heart may be, there is not one that is a stranger to grief, or unacquainted with sorrow. Trouble is the portion of all, and while we stay here on earth we are sure to have our appointed share.

But if it be a sad truth that sorrow abounds everywhere, methinks it is a far sadder truth that, although many are afflicted, few get any good from their affliction. Although all have sorrow how few are the better for their sorrows. We are not, beloved, among those who believe there is any hap-hazard or chance in the afflictions that fall to our lot; we believe that God ruleth, and that he "who maketh the clouds his chariot, and who walketh upon the wings of the wind" has a purpose in all the troubles that beset our path and grieve our heart. But take mankind at large, and how few are benefited by their afflictions or improved by their sorrows. Take the great mass of the ungodly, they have their sorrows, and yet you may go into a thousand homes where grief seems to reign triumphantly, and you will find the deeper their sorrows the deeper their sin. God may smite down one comfort after another, and blast a hundred hopes in succession, and the only sad result is that the heart becomes the harder. If trouble would convert the world it would have been converted long before this; if affliction had power to break the heart of the natural man broken hearts would not be so scarce as they are. But it is a grievous

truth, that just as God's favours, apart from the influence of the Holy Spirit, fail to draw men to God, so trials unblest of God equally fail to drive to Him. Methinks there are some here this morning who have been smitten of God over and over again, and yet like the brutish ox you have but kicked at the goads that have pricked you, and you are as far off from God as if He had not chastened you at all.

And is it not a sad thing too, that what is true of the mass of the ungodly is also true of a large number of God's children? *We* do not learn the lessons which God would teach us by our chastisements. Never does the tear roll down the cheek of the saint, but that tear is meant to teach us something. God never chastens His children for nought. Can you imagine an earthly parent who loves his child fondly, inflicting pain upon him wantonly, without rhyme or reason. Impossible! And shall our Father who is in heaven and who has within his heart a boundless ocean of love—shall He lay upon us even the lightest stroke without some motive? Never. And yet like Israel of old, how often we are chastened of God, and never ask the reason why, or kiss the hand that holds the rod. I think those solemn words in the fourth chapter of Amos, where God says, "I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord," will apply to many of us. Turn to the chapter and read the eighth verse. "So two or three cities wandered into one city to drink water; but they were not satisfied: *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.*" The same sad truth is proclaimed in the ninth verse. "I have smitten you in blasting and mildew; when your gardens and your vineyards, and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmer worm devoured them: *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.*" Listen to the sad echo of the tenth verse. "I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt; your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.*" Listen again to the eleventh verse. "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.*" Here you find God chastening his people over and over again with all kinds of chastisement, and yet He had this sad charge as often to bring against them, "*yet have ye not returned unto me.*" Oh, believer! the reason why some of us are troubled so long is because we are such dull scholars. The reason why the trial is so often upon our threshold is because we have not returned unto the Lord. As the verse of our text expresses, we have been oppressed and afflicted, and yet none of us have said "Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night;" so that you will see the charge which is brought against us is this—that when we have been stricken of God, instead of turning to him with lamentation and enquiry, we have in our trouble shunned him.

It is not our purpose this morning to dwell upon the subject of unsanctified affliction, but to take the latter clause of the verse, "GOD WHO GIVETH SONGS IN THE NIGHT. And our subject is one well calculated to give joy to the heart if the Holy Spirit will but carry it

there. Our subject is this—*that there is sufficient in our God to give to every saint a song even during his darkest night of sorrow;* or in other words that however lone and gloomy the night through which we may be called to pass, yet there is sufficient in our God to give us cause for rejoicing. If this be true, I think we have alighted upon a deep well of refreshing water this morning. If it be a blessed fact that whatever my troubles are I have a fund of joy to sustain me even in the darkest moment, then if I rise not up as upon eagles' wings, it is passing strange. Child of God, up to this morning you have been like Hagar in the wilderness, trying to get water from the bottle; you have gone from one earthly source to the other seeking joy, and as you sit here now, like her you are full of despair. Where is your bottle? It is dry and cracked and useless; and you are saying with almost broken heart, "where am I to get water from?" Here it is before you in this book! Look at the text—"God who giveth songs in the night." Turn away from the bottle of dusty skin and see if there springs not up at your very side a well of sparkling water. Our error has been that we have tried to get our joy from the things of life, we have tried to draw our happiness from earthly sources, whereas there is sufficient in our God to make us joyful even during the darkest night.

I. Let me try to explain and point out how this is so. I think it is *because our sufficiency in God is in no way affected by our outward circumstances.* Let me put this as clearly as I can. It matters not what your outward circumstances may be, or how changed they may become, they in no way alter that sufficiency which as a saint you have in God. So that if in times of prosperity you ever found anything in your God which gave you cause to rejoice, you have that same cause undiminished now, let your circumstances be never so adverse. Let me mention a few things that have been a cause of joy to your heart in days that are past. Have you never rejoiced in the *purposes* of your God? Can you not remember seasons when it has been a wondrous source of strengthening to your heart to remember that whatever happened, God's sovereign will and purpose still moved on, and that nothing could thwart His decrees? And have you not revelled in the thought that your God walked upon the waves, and ruled the tempest, and turned the clouds into His chariot. Your heart has exulted as you have said, "He is the Lord, and who can hinder Him; who shall say unto Him, what doest Thou?" Now, my brethren, because your circumstances in life are changed, does that alter His purposes? If you rejoiced in their certain fulfilment last year, may you not equally rejoice in them now.

"Our lives through various scenes are drawn,
And vexed with trifling cares,
While thine eternal thought moves on,
Thine undisturbed affairs."

Another well of comfort to your soul was found in *the love of God.* Well, has God's love altered? Because you have not the comforts you once possessed, does that prove that God's love to you has varied?

No! his love remains like himself the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, therefore if my soul ever sang a song at the remembrance of it, it is sheer treason for me to be silent now. If it has pleased Him

in His love to cause a shadow to overcast me, should I on that account think less of his love? Have not also the *promises* of God been as manna to your souls over and over again? "Yes," you answer, then I reply, "have *they* altered?" Can you put your finger upon one promise now and say "that promise though precious to me once has now become null and void?" Can you say of one "it has not the power it once possessed?" No! His promises are like the stars that shine in the brightest night; and remain unmoved whatever may be the convulsions of earth. If then you ever did rejoice in God's promises, there is no reason why you should not rejoice in them this morning, for they abide the same.

Have you not in seasons past found the *thought of God having pardoned you* a fountain of joy? Can you not remember some days when the word *pardon* sent a throb of joy to your inmost heart? you say "Yes, many a time." Well, dear friend, is your pardon affected by the night in which you are now dwelling? Have the clouds of sorrow blotted out that word forgiven, once so legibly written in characters of blood. You dare not think it. Then the only conclusion you can possibly come to is, that there is the same matter for joy now as ever you possessed in your brightest days.

Yet once again. Have you not often rejoiced *in the anticipation of heaven.* Have you not known what it is to turn to that chapter in Peter, and read of "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," and while doing so have an echo in your heart repeating "reserved in heaven for you?" And the thought has made your heart so light that you have scarcely felt the earth beneath your feet. Have you any reason to doubt that heaven is yours because troubles are yours as well? Have the waters of affliction washed out the writing of your title deeds? Is heaven peopled with those who on earth escaped tribulation, or with those who came out of it? Blessed be God! all we have in him remains untouched and uninfluenced by earthly circumstances.

What is *your night?* Suppose it be one of *changed prospects.* There is as great a change in your affairs now as there is between night and day. There was a time when temporal affairs did not trouble you much; for years you never knew what it was to have a care about anything. Now it is just the very reverse. You work ten times harder than you did, and yet you seem to get but a tenth of what you did before. Your night, my brother, is a dark one, but does it alter what God is to you and what God has for you? Can you show me anything in the word to prove that you have lost your God through your poverty? Is he less full of love to you because you are in straightened circumstances? If you turn to the third of Habakkuk, and the seventeenth verse, you will find it *is* possible to lose everything, and *yet* at the same time rejoice in God. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall the fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: *yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*" My friend, although thy prospects be so changed, although every fig tree you have be blasted, and on your vines this morning there be no grapes, yet is there something that remains the same—YOUR GOD. Find your all in God as once you found your God in all, and you will no longer be destitute of song.

But perhaps with another it may not be changed prospects, but *changed health*. There was a time when you never knew what sickness meant and when pain was a perfect stranger. How changed is it now. You no longer feel that buoyancy of health you once possessed, but on the contrary, every action is now accompanied with pain, and therefore you have lost your joy. I must ask *you* a question, the same as I did the other one. Does change of health change your relationship to God? Do you anywhere in Scripture find that sickness is a barrier between the Saviour and his saved one? What have you lost in God by your sickness? What cause for rejoicing in Him is removed? None most certainly; there is not a promise that was fulfilled in health that shall not be fulfilled in sickness, nor love enjoyed in health that shall be withdrawn in illness. Have you ever heard of a father losing his love for his darling child because the child was weak. Never; his love would rather increase than decrease, under such circumstances, and shall our Heavenly Father show less compassion than His earthly types.

But there are some here I know, to whom this next point will come home; those who are saying, *my night is a night of bereavement*. Some of their loved ones have been stricken down and removed by the arm of death. The only son of his mother, and she a widow perhaps, has been laid low; or in another case, the beloved mother has been torn from her children. Grant it—but at the same time is your God dead? Have you lost Him? Has the icy hand of death cut the thousand cords that bound you to Him? Is not God still living. There was once a mother who lost her youngest child, and weeping bitterly, refused all consolation, until the little sister said "Mamma, why do you cry so? *Is God dead?*" My friend, however you may have been bereaved, your God remains the same; therefore, look away from changing scenes and dying friends—to Him; and even in the darkest night of bereavement you will find sufficient in your God to give you sweetest song.

And now, lastly on this point, I can imagine one of you saying, "my night is darker than any of those you have mentioned." Mine is a *night of spiritual depression*. It is not a want in the home, but a want in the heart I feel. It is not bereavement of father or mother, or sister or brother, but the bereavement of spiritual joy which I once had. I grant you, dear friend, your night is an exceedingly dark one, but where do you find in God's word that being full of spiritual depression renders null and void the blessed saying, "Accepted in the beloved," or "complete in him." If our acceptance in Christ was in any way influenced by our earthly circumstances, I should not have a word of consolation to give to my own soul or yours this morning, but if you believe that you are as much in Christ when depressed as when you are exalted, although your soul this morning may seem like lead, and you find yourself unable to enter into the joy of worship, there yet remains the foundation for a song, you are still safe in Christ. God's covenant with you remains the same, you are still accepted in the person of Jesus. You may be trembling on the rock, but its firm base shakes not beneath your feet. Yes! God is our rock, and I thought so more than ever when down at the sea-side. The tide may ebb and the tide may flow, but the rock remains for ever. So is it with our

temporal circumstances. My brother, your temporal circumstances may be running on the ebb like a sluice, comforts may be lessening every moment, but your God stands, and you stand on Him; and as in the low ebb tide you see more of the rock than at the full flood, so perhaps your very trials here on earth will enable you to see more of your God than ever you beheld in what you now term your prosperous days. What a blessed thing it is just to rest upon our God, and feel that although from this Sabbath morning to the day of my death I may have nothing but bereavement, cares and toils, yet these things influence not my sufficiency in him.

Now, secondly, and very briefly, I want to mention SOME OF THE SONGS GOD GIVES HIS SAINTS. During the night what songs do his nightingales sing?

I think, first, he gives the *song of faith*. And no sweeter song can be given. There is more music in this song than in any other, and I know of nothing more lovely than to be in the company of some child of God, who though chastened sore, can yet sing in the language of believing confidence "I know that all things are working together for my good." This thrilling song has been heard above the tempest's roar. The heavenly mariner has often stood upon the deck with the blinding spray of every wave encircling him, and as one thing after another has been swept from his side, a God-given song has arisen upon the gale, "I know I can never shipwrecked be, because I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

Sweet song, this song of faith; to know all its music you should have heard it sung by the martyr as he stood surrounded by the flames. Time after time, in old Smithfield, has it been heard above the crackling of the burning pile, "when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." This song of faith has echoed through many and many a dungeon cell. Paul and Silas were put in the prison, and their feet made fast in the stock; but at midnight the prisoners sang, and their companions heard them; and thus has many a dungeon in later days been made to ring with melody. Have you ever heard the song on the death bed? I think it sounds sweetest there. When you see one weak in body, but strong in God, singing,—

> "Sweet to rejoice in lively hope,
> That, when my change shall come,
> Angels shall hover round my bed,
> And waft my spirit home."

There is another song almost as sweet as that of faith. It is called *the song of hope*. Patience worketh experience, and experience hope. And what is this song? "I know that God can help, even at the very last. I remember that Abraham had his knife uplifted to slay his son, before the mercy came that stopped the blow. Though God seems to tarry, I will wait for Him still." In the most pitiless storm that can fall upon a child of God, there is always the one ray of hope lighting up the gloom. On the bosom of every thunder cloud there always rests this rainbow. Take away from a man all hope, and you leave but incarnate despair and a walking Hell. But when did you ever hear of the child of God that was robbed entirely of his hope? It

is not to be taken away, nor will it leave a man ashamed. Whatever song you may not be able to sing this morning, you can surely utter this one of hope, and say with David, "Why art thou cast down, O, my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? *Hope thou in God;* for I shall yet praise him who is the help of my countenance, and my God."

Another song for the night is that *of tranquility.* This is a much softer song than the others I have mentioned. You cannot always hear it so clearly, but I think there is a more melting melody about it. You have perhaps heard the song of faith as clear as a clarion, and the song of hope in notes that thrilled the heart, but have you ever had your soul more stirred to the depths than by the quiet strains of tranquility. "Thy will be done" is the oft-recurring refrain. The man has lost his worldly possessions, and is now steeped to the lips in poverty; but he sings,

"If thou shouldst call me to resign,
What most I prize—it ne'er was mine;
I only yield Thee what was Thine;
Thy will be done!"

There is another friend who once rejoiced in bodily strength, but is now wasted and emaciated, and in an agony of pain upon a bed of sickness. Do listen!!—for he sings:—

"Should pining sickness waste away
My life in premature decay,
My Father, still I strive to say,—
Thy will be done!"

Thus does the child of God, by heavenly strength, bear his trials not only without a murmur, but with a song.

My time is so nearly gone, that I must only mention the two remaining songs. The first one is entitled "*The song of sympathy with Jesus.*" It runs something after this sort:—"'Tis true O Lord, that I am tried and sorrows press me sore, but I rejoice in this, for am I not by my very grief brought into likeness with Thee, O blessed Saviour dear. The thorns that prick my flesh do but bring me into closer sympathy with Thee, who for my sake hadst Thy brow encircled with them. Had I a heart that was free from care, and eyes that knew no tears, how could I be a follower of Thine, O man of sorrows, who could throw out the challenge "Behold and see if there be any sorrow "like unto my sorrow." Had I no bitter cups to drink, I were unlike Thee, my Lord, who shuddered at the dreadful draught Thy Father held to Thee, when praying in Gethsemane. Sweet sorrow—happy grief, that makes me one with Thee."

It is an honour for the disciple to be as his Lord, and the servant as his Master, and this thought sheds a glory round the darkest trial and leads the soul to song. There is still another song, it is "*The song of heavenly anticipation.*" It is a sweet song to Christ's children; and it can be sung best in the darkest night. The chorus is this:—"it will only make heaven more sweet at the close." The saint is racked in pain, and knows he cannot last long; he takes up the book and reads "There shall be no pain there—no sickness, no sorrow." "Ah!" saith he, "this pain will only make heaven more sweet at the close." He loses a beloved relative or friend, and he turns to the book and reads "There

shall be no death there." And so he makes his present troubles as a dark background, to show up heaven's glories. If you are mourning over troubles here, and cannot sing about earth, then sing about heaven, for the darker your nights below, "they will only make heaven more sweet at the close." There is one night coming to us all, a night through which all here this morning will have to pass; and for those of us, who are God's children, there is provided a song—it is the *night of death.*

Am I speaking to any who are in perpetual bondage through fear of death? My dear friends, wait until you "come to the night" before you trouble yourself whether a song will be given you or no. When death comes, dying grace will come with it. Although it may now stand before your trembling spirit as a dark grim spectre of the night, it shall yet be changed into a glorious angel holding in his right hand a golden key to open before you the everlasting doors of heaven. When the moment comes that alone we must pass through the river, we shall do so with no countenance convulsed with terror. Far from it, for just when earthly props are falling on every hand, our God and Maker will give us some sweet song to cheer the advancing night, and that song shall no sooner die upon our death-stricken lips than it shall break forth again in louder, sweeter strains before the throne where life is one perpetual song, and where our Saviour has declared there is no night.

But the dark thought oppresses me that there are many here who if they were called to die to-night would have a songless death. I will just mention a circumstance that has deeply impressed me, and I pray God it may strike home to some hearts. It was but last Friday that I went, at the request of some dear relatives, to see an aged man who was evidently near the eternal shore. On my asking him if he thought he was ready for the great change, his only answer was, "don't worry me now about these things." I said to him, "will you but allow me to pray with you?" He replied, "you may if you like," but before I had uttered two or three words, he stopped me again, saying, "he did not want to be worried, but if I liked, I might come and see him on the morrow." Alas, at half-past seven that morning he was a corpse. *There was no song in that night.* The Lord save you all, and bring you all as sinners to a simple trust in Jesus crucified, and when we pass through that last night on earth, and as we are passing through the varied nights I have feebly attempted to describe, may we all find, to our heart's rejoicing, Him who giveth songs in the night. The Lord add His blessing for Jesus' sake—Amen.

Scripture Read—Psalms 27 and 42.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—84, Part III—691—685.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

PEACE *versus* WAR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 17TH, 1870, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord *be* with you all."—II THESS. 3–16.

SINCE last Lord's Day when together we meditated, upon the glorious truth, that the very wrath of man is made subservient to Jehovah's praise, momentous and stirring events have transpired. War has been declared between the two leading countries of Europe, and France and Prussia now stand only waiting the word to commence the grim and hateful struggle. The political sky which but a few weeks ago was declared to be clear of every cloud is now dark with hellish passion, and will in a few days (unless some unforeseen circumstance steps in at the eleventh hour) be all in a glow with the crimson clouds of battle. Our soul sickens at the thought, and feels ready to exclaim in the language of one of England's sweetest poets:—

"Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumour of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more! My ear is pain'd,
My soul is sick, with every day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is filled."

It is humiliating to our race to find that after well nigh nineteen centuries of christian time have passed, the clumsy method of war yet remains the last resource of arbitration for the nations. Humiliating did I say? Yes, and something infinitely more, it is a crime only worthy of its father, hell! Strip war of its outward pageantry and pomp, tear from it the gaudy cloak called national honor; look at it in its naked reality, was ever so loathsome and horrid a spectre seen outside perdition? This is the monster that has so unexpectedly stalked upon the scene, carrying dismay and panic and grief into the hearts and homes of myriads. Who called this demon up? What compensation is there for the curse? These questions are soon answered. This war is only the food demanded by accursed pride in order to glut its insatiable appetite; men are to become mere food for cannon to maintain what is libellously called national glory. It looks like bitter sarcasm to contrast the paltry causes and the awful results of war. Some petty point of etiquette neglected—some ridiculously little slight, which, in ordinary every day life would be counted unworthy of any notice, becomes when offered to a nation sufficient motive to lead it to the battle-field; to wash away some tiny stain supposed to be found upon

the robe of honor—a stain not worthy of the shedding of a tear—lo! a very ocean of blood is spilt—to avenge an insult, maintain the old bugbear of the "the balance of power," or glorify the ambition of a man, countries are to be desolated, trade paralysed, blood in unknown measure spilt, agonies endured by those who are as innocent of the quarrel as new-born babes, and all the miseries contained in that one word WAR let loose upon the continent. I again repeat that it is horrible and sickening beyond all description, to think that even this week there will, in all probability be heard, the beat of the war drum, the roar of the cannon and the sharp crack of the rifle, carrying death to a thousand hearts. Who can bear to contemplate without a sigh the wives that will be made widows, and the multitudes of children that will shortly become orphans? Let us rather this morning think of these things as a dark foil to give extra beauty to the language of our text, and only employ the thunder cloud of battle as a back ground on which to paint the rainbow of peace. Doubtless many present have often with the speaker gazed upon a well known engraving taken from a painting by one of England's greatest artists, entitled "War and Peace." In the picture of the former you have the cavalry soldier lying dead upon the ground, with his charger over him, whilst around in heavy wreaths there hangs the smoke, through which can be discerned the ruined cottage with the creeper still clinging by the shattered window. In the picture of the latter you have a pastoral scene, the sheep are gently feeding in a field in midst of which there lies a dismounted gun, into the mouth of which one of the flock is fearlessly and wonderingly looking. The contrast is complete, war beautifies peace and peace intensifies the horror of war.

It is my desire now if possible to accomplish the same result. During the past week we have all been riveted before the spectacle of war; it has met us in our reading, it has sounded in our ears on every hand, and in a large degree has absorbed our thoughts. Like the glittering eye of a serpent, it has fascinated us and chained us to the spot; but blessed be God, the light of the Sabbath morn has broken the charm, and with infinite relief we turn from the bloody picture to its fairer companion one of peace. In place of garments rolled in blood, we have green pastures and still waters, and for the roar of hateful artillery, we hear words sweet as the music of the spheres. Listen to them!! "The Lord of peace himself give you peace, always by all means. The Lord be with you all."

We have in the text three blessed things, all breathing peace, *a designation* "the Lord of Peace," *a supplication* "Give you peace," *a benediction* "The Lord be with you all," and we close with *an interrogation*, "Have you this peace?"

I. First then we have A PEACEFUL DESIGNATION. He who is the eternal and omnipotent Jehovah—"The man of war," The lion of the tribe of Judah," is here described as the Lord of Peace." This title is only in accordance with that given him by the prophetic tongue of the eloquent Isaiah, who, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost declared nigh eight hundred years before that, "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the

Mighty God, the everlasting Father, *the Prince of Peace.*" This concluding name forms the glittering apex of the pyramid of titles whose massive foundation is "Wonderful." Never did name so perfectly portray the character. Our Saviour *is*, as well as called, "The Lord of Peace." Let us for a few minutes try and demonstrate it. He is so *in His disposition.* Peace like silver sheen is woven in His nature. His life manifested it, His words breathed it, His looks beamed with it, His prayers pleaded for it, His chastisement was to procure it and His death was to seal it. The escutcheon of Hell is a roaring *lion* with bloody fangs seeking whom he may devour; but on the imperial standard of Heaven there appears a *Lamb* as it had been slain. How beautifully was the peaceable disposition of the Lord unveiled by His own hand, during His sojourn upon earth. How He seemed to dwell with delight upon the theme of His own compassionate tenderness—and if at times the holy anger of the Lamb was kindled, and burning words dropped from His lips, how soon they were followed by the language of peace, the more soothing by its very contrast—as the atmosphere is sometimes the cradle of the storm and the chariot of the thunder, but *generally* the gentle nurse that kisses the floweret's cheek and bears on its bosom the song of the bird, so was it with Jehovah Jesus. Peace, Peace, Peace, was the psalm of his lip and life. You will find a touching illustration of this in the commencement of His public ministry. He has just come to the quiet town of Nazareth, and on the Sabbath morn, he enters as was His wont, into the synagogue and signifies His willingness to read. The book of the prophet Esaias is handed to Him. I can imagine the breathless stillness that pervaded the people as He opened the roll and selected a portion. What will He read? Shall it be some of the stern denunciations and dreadful threatenings that are to be found within that book? Will the words breathe fire and sword against a wicked and adulterous generation? No! for He found the place where it was written, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," and he stops there, *not* reading the next sentence, "and the day of vengeance of our Lord." He closes the book and returns it to the minister, whilst the eyes of all present are fastened on Him. He speaks!! Listen to the short sermon!! "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Oh gracious words, how becoming to Him who in His nature and disposition is the Lord of Peace. Yet later on, His loving disposition found vent in words that have been as a heavenly balm to weary wounded souls for ages, and will as long as the word of God shall endure. He had just spoken some of the most scathing words his lips ever uttered to the favored but guilty cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Yet behold, how the storm gives place to an invite sweet and soft as the evening dew, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; *for I am meek and lowly in heart*, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Truly our Saviour—the Lamb of

God is in His disposition the Lord of peace. This fact may be yet more clearly seen if we remember *how long-suffering He is with His enemies.*

What trifles prove sufficient to light the torch of war, if there be the desire first. An affront, however slight, and half of that imagined, some little disrespect, and that perhaps more than half invited, are quite sufficient, and before their influence the slaughter of a myriad of men becomes of secondary importance. The tinder being dry with war fever, requires nothing but a single spark. Contrast with this what our Lord bears from His avowed foes and His long suffering towards them, and you will then be enabled in some measure to grasp the peaceableness of His disposition. Oh what affronts does He receive, and yet forbears to smite. What indignities are heaped upon Him. How is His name profaned—His Sabbath desecrated—His laws broken—His book derided—His worship neglected. What monarch on earth has ever been so openly defied, and that by creatures who are at His mercy for their very breath and bread? How have *His* ambassadors been received? Did He consider every slight that they received a cause for war with the human race, in what age would there ever have been a peace? Time would fail to tell, of all His representatives have suffered from the world's governments and kings. They have been scourged, racked, broken upon the wheel and burnt at the stake by thousands, and in all their agonies the apple of His eye has been touched, and yet He has held in His wrath. Ambassador after ambassador has been sent with messages of mercy, and offers of free pardon. Still are they found pleading on His behalf to a world that turns a deaf ear. Why all this? You have the answer in the second of Peter, the third chapter and ninth verse. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, *not willing that any should perish*, but that all should come to repentance." The very existence of His enemies proves He is the Lord of peace. This peace loving disposition of our Lord can also be demonstrated by *His forbearance with His friends.* A slight from an open enemy is insignificant in its power to wound, compared with one that comes from a professed friend. In the former case it is expected and provided for; hard though the blow may be, it falls upon a breast that is covered with a coat of mail. But in the latter case we are taken at a disadvantage, and the iron enters right into the soul and rankles there, whilst the lips murmur in the language of the psalmist, "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me; then would I have hid myself from him; but it was thou a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance." The more we love, the more we feel the wound the loved one gives, and the warmer the friendship violated, the intenser the feelings of our wrath. Now who among even the most peaceable present could for one day put up with the treatment that Christ receives from His friends. What weakness, what base ingratitude, what falseness of affection are shown to Him, by the very ones whose names are engraven on His heart. And yet He bears with us and loves us still. Surely God's grace is not more marvellous in its first love than in that love's continuation. It is

only pure grace "that will not let me go." The long suffering of the Lord received a grand exemplification in the history of His chosen people Israel, and they were no worse than are we, but faithful types of the elected church. Turn with me to psalm seventy-eight and read from verse thirty-six, and see if the words do not apply with equal force to us. "Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they stedfast in His covenant. *But He being full of compassion forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not; yea many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.*"

Oh! how many a time has He withheld His just ire from us and turned away from His great wrath. How often has He said to us as to Israel. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah, how shall I set the as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. *I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger*, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; *for I am God, and not man.*" Thus do we find Him ever patient and seeking peace.

The Lord is also the "Lord of peace" *in His actions.* This is seen in the fact, that He *purchased it* at a tremendous cost. Nothing is so easily commenced as war, or lost as peace. It required but the one sin of Adam to light the torch and break the harmony existing between the Creator and His creatures. But it required the blood of the second Adam to quench the war fire and cement the peace. The only way to judge a person's true admiration for anything is by the amount he is willing to forego and endure, in order to its attainment. Judging our Lord's love of peace by this standard, what must it not be?

Peace could only be procured by His own humiliation, agony and death. Did He shrink from the cost? Blessed be His name—No! For peace He gave His sacred shoulders to the bloody scourge in Pilate's Hall for "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." To purchase peace He gave Himself up to the death, for He made "peace through the blood of His cross." His tears and groans—His sighs and blood—His shame and death—all proclaim His estimate of peace. Not only did He purchase peace, but He was also *the messenger of it.* He came from heaven bearing in His hand the white flag. He was heralded by the angels as such. Their Christmas carol on the hills of Bethlehem was "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." At His baptism the peaceful nature of His mission was again made known, by the descent of the Holy Spirit. In what form was it that the Spirit alighted upon Him? Was it that of the royal eagle with outspread wings and threatening talons? Far from it, for "John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven *like a dove*, and it abode upon Him." That dove-like inauguration of our Master to His public work, was but prophetical of His ministry, for he went "and preached peace," and many bare testimony to the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. But not only was He the purchaser and messenger of peace, He is now *the preserver of it.* It has well been observed by one of the old writers, that "it is only Christ that keeps matters from coming to an open rupture between us and the court of heaven." Having pro-

cured peace by His death, He ascended to preserve it. He is His peoples' ambassador above, and whilst He remains our representative there, our peace is secured, and glorious truth, "He *ever liveth* to make intercession for us." Oh, what should we do, beloved, amid all our sins and imperfections, had we no advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. But we have. The peace that was purchased by His blood is now secured by His life, and He only waits to place the crown upon the whole by *perfecting our peace.* Sweet though the realization of peace on earth is, it is yet imperfect. Refreshing though its streams are, the fountain is better, and we have yet to drink of that, and

> "If such the sweetness of the stream,
> What must the fountain be,
> Where saints and angels draw their bliss,
> Immediately from Thee!"

Its sweetness we shall soon know, for it is the will of Him who has purchased and now preserves peace, to make his people know its glorious perfection. Peace without the alarm of battle—peace beyond the noise or even rumour of strife—peace, deep and calm as mountain lake unruffled by a breeze, yet glittering in the sunlight, is the sweet consummation of the dealings of the Lord of peace with us. So much then for our first point.

I have dwelt so much longer upon this first portion of my sermon than I intended, that but little time remains for meditation upon the other parts of the verse. I can but give you the thoughts, and leave it to you to beat them out in private.

II. We have in the second place A PEACEFUL SUPPLICATION. "The Lord of peace, give you peace." Peace here means, I think, all kinds of peace—peace in the conscience—peace in the home—peace in the church—peace in view of the future. We will but mention two which are mainly intended here. First, a *conscience peace.* This is one of the greatest gifts the Lord can bestow. What is a man without it? He may be surrounded by every luxury, but if he lacks this, he lives in a perpetual hell; there is a gnawing worm within that makes his very outward comforts as so many mockeries. Let him but possess it, and he has an unfailing source of joy that will sustain him under every privation. The effect of a want of conscience peace has been well illustrated by the following anecdote:—A man once said, he could cause a sheep to starve to death with plenty of food close by, this being doubted, he placed the sheep in an iron cage with an abundance of grass, but, in an adjoining cage, he placed a ravening wolf; too terrified by the proximity of its foe, to eat, it soon pined away and died. So it is with man; there can be no enjoyment whilst at hand there rages an unpacified conscience. But this peace Jesus gives, and who can describe its sweetness? To use the beautiful words of the late Dr. Hamilton, "Peace is love reposing—it is love on the green pastures—it is love beside the still waters—it is that great calm that comes over the conscience when it sees the atonement sufficient, and the Saviour willing—it is unclouded azure in a lake of glass—it is the soul which Christ has pacified, spread out in serenity and simple faith, and the Lord God, merciful and gracious, smiling over it." This peace is a

hidden one, it cannot be detected by the eye, though sometimes its reflection may be seen upon the countenance. It is not a peace that smiles upon the surface, but one that fills the great deeps of the heart. To see a christian as he often is, tossed about with care and well-nigh overwhelmed with tempestuous floods, one might be easily induced to ask "where is the peace he possesses, above others"? Our answer is, "*Within*!" The ocean, under the might of the hurricane, is lashed into huge foam-crested waves, and made to boil like a pot; but only so upon the surface, deep down the waters are as still as an autumn noon, not a ripple or motion disturbs their quietude. So with the saint; unseen to mortal eye, there are serene ocean depths of peace, calmed and kept calm by the voice of the Lord of peace. That this happy experience might be theirs was prayed for by the apostle. But as these words were addressed unto the church at Thessalonica, they may also be understood as praying for their *church peace*. A church without peace is in just as wretched a condition as a heart without it. No country has ever suffered half so much through the ravages of war, as has God's church from its internal strifes. Will the present war trample down the golden grain, and turn the smiling vineyards of the Rhine into the desolations of a wilderness? If so, it will but illustrate the future of any church that has not peace in its borders. What harvests of souls have been neglected, and how has the beauty of the Lord's vineyard been destroyed whilst christians have fought.

And alas, as in other wars, what trifles kindle the flame. Some little grievance between two members, which a word of explanation on either side would heal at once, is allowed to grow and rankle, whilst partisans flock to the rival standards, and the few neutrals left find themselves powerless to avert the calamity. This I believe is the way in which one half of the internal battles of the Church arise. God save us, as a people, from so great a catastrophe, and long continue unto us the happy peace now reigning in our midst. Notice, further, that the peace desired was a *perpetual* one. "Peace always" was the Apostle's prayer. Very different this to the peace which has been Europe's of late. Peace did I say? I had spoken more correctly had I termed it *an armed truce*. So little confidence has there been of its continuation, that the nations, though not warring, have been standing ready armed to the teeth. Something far higher than this is prayed for. A peace so long, that war shall be forgotten—a peace so complete, that the probability of war shall cease. A peace that shall abide and rule in the heart, and only know change when it gives place to the perfection of peace in heaven. Yes, peace always—in the dark hour as well as the bright—in adversity as well as prosperity—in cross-bearing as well as crown-wearing—in surrounding tumult as in surrounding calm—in the hour of death as in the days of life. It was also to be a peace that came *by all means*. "May every privilege (Paul seems to say) which, as Christians, you possess, be so many golden-pipes, conveying to your hearts the oil of joy and peace! When you pray, may you lose your burdens and your cares, and find in it sweet peace. When you gather for the holy purposes of public worship, may a heavenly calm be yours, and may you find the sanctuary a means of peace. When alone, you meditate upon the promises, may they be to you as songs of consolation. Ah, dear friends, what a blessed thing it would

be, if, from this morning we were all to receive peace by every means, even our Father's chastisement included.

III. A PEACEFUL BENEDICTION. I have but a moment or two to give to this last, but not least, sweet portion of my subject. "The Lord be with you all." What is not included in these words? What blessing can our hearts desire that they shall not receive, if this benediction be but theirs. If the Lord is with me, what can I lack? If the Lord is with me, for what shall I pine? "The Lord be with you all"—let us roll these sweet words under our tongue, for they *are* sweet to our taste. Think for a minute of all they embrace. *His presence be with you to comfort.* May you never miss his smile or mourn His absence. In your journey through the wilderness, may your beloved's arm be ever around you. Abroad or at home, in the shop or the field—in sickness or health—in poverty's vale or abounding in wealth—still may your Lord be with you. His *power be with you to keep.* In the seasons of temptation, may He hold above thy head His shield. In times of weakness, may He make thee strong, and gird thee with his might. In climbing hills of difficulty, may his right hand assist thee, and in descending the vale of humiliation, may His arm uphold thee. *His Spirit be with you to guide.* In the day time may a cloudy pillar go before thee, and in the night season, may one of fire direct thee. In thine ears may a voice be heard, "this is the way, walk ye in it," and in all the winding paths of life may the Shepherd's voice and staff preserve thee, and guide thy feet the road that leads to heaven. All these and countless other precious blessings are embraced in "The Lord be with you all."

IV. AN INTERROGATION. I will now close by asking you all, "Have you this peace?" Is there within your breast a pacified conscience and a soul that has found its rest? Thank God many of us can say "Yes." We have learned by experience, the joyful peace the "Prince of peace" can give; our hearts are kept by it, and our spirit rejoices in it. But I fear that out of the number present, many are strangers to it. Do you want it, dear friend? Are you seeking for it as a hidden treasure? Then go to Calvary, and on a cross there you will behold a dying God-man. Cast yourself at his feet, and as a sinner accept him as thy only Saviour. Look to him as thine only hope, and cry, "Lord Jesus, thou Lord of peace, give me peace." Believe me He will say to thee as He has to thousands, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." And now may the Lord of peace himself give us peace always by all means. The Lord be with us all.—Amen.

Scripture Read—Psalm 122, and II Thessalonians, 3rd Chap.
Hymns sung from "Our own Hymn Book"—916—726—1052.

We should feel under a deep debt of gratitude to every reader who would kindly do his best to extend the circulation of our Printed word where it is already read, and communicate with us about its introduction into fresh neighbourhoods.

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
53, Bancroft Road, Mile End Road, E.

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THE BIRTH-DAY OF BLESSING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 7TH, 1870. BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"From this day will I bless you."—HAGGAI II—xix.

The affairs of the Jewish church had a remarkable turn given to them, both in history and prophecy, by the captivity in Babylon. Nine out of twelve of the prophets that are known to us as "the minor" lived and prophecied before the captivity, and often was the "burden of the Lord" denunciations of the people's sins, and stern threatenings of punishment in store. With sad heart and in solemn language did they fortell the doom that hung over the heads of the guilty nation. The three remaining ones commenced their work sometime after the return of the captivity—Haggai and Zechariah about eighteen years. The building of the temple was at this time being greatly neglected, not only through the opposition of the enemy, but far more through the want of spirit on the part of Israel. Both of these prophets sought by strong and stirring words to arouse the energy of the people in the prosecution of so good as well as national a work. Haggai began his exhortations some two months prior to Zechariah, but the latter continued them about two years longer. In the chapter from which I have selected my text you will find three distinct sermons for the encouragement of those who, under the influence of the words recorded in the previous chapter, had at last commenced the work in right down earnest. From the first to the ninth verse he cheers the builders by the declaration that the house they were now rearing should far exceed in spiritual glory, though not in outward splendour, the one that bore the name of Solomon. It was in this temple that the Desire of all nations, the "greater than Solomon," should walk and speak. From the tenth verse to the nineteenth he comforts them with the assurance that though, through their previous slothfulness in the matter, their own prosperity had been blasted, yet from the time of their revival in the work, a renewed blessing should be given them. Surely we may learn from this in passing that neglect of God's work is often, to say the least of it, bad policy for our own success. They are short-sighted persons indeed, yea, blind as bats, who imagine that they shall, by stinginess in the work of God, gain personal advantage.

I venture to assert that the cause of much ill-success in life is often to be found in the want of zeal for God's house. With the knife of their so-called economy, they cut their own fingers, and prune away

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h eir own fruitfulness. As they will put their own affairs before God, He permits them to have but little to put. The best investment is consecration to the Lord and His work, and often the quickest way to fill our own barns is by emptying them into His lap. You look after your God's cause, and He will look after yours. Doubtless many of hese Jews, like those of the present day, thought they could ill afford the time or expense of looking after a work not connected with their own private advancemeut; but they had to learn by experience the folly of their calculations, for God smote the produce of their selfish labours with mildew and with blasting. In the third and last sermon, the prophet assures Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and the foremost in the work, that he should have the high honour of being one of the ancestry of the Messiah. It is from the closing sentence of the second sermon I would speak to you this evening, "From this day will I bless you.

I think you will at once perceive the drift of my sermon when I remind you that the temple was a type of that church of which every individual believer is a living stone. From the day when the foundation of that temple is laid, the promise is ours.

When is the foundation day from whence the blessing dates? This question may be answered in more than one way. In one sense it is from everlasting, for God's people are *in purpose* part of the building from before all time. That day when sovereign love chose me, and enrolled my name in the list of the elect was a day from which God says "I will bless you." That day when Jehovah chose me in the rubbish of the fall to be a stone hereafter to be quarried forth and planted in the walls. Every child of God will be able to trace back the blessing that has culminated in glory to the fountain head of divine and imperial decree. In a second sense the foundation day may be dated as the day on which the atoning sacrifice was made. *That* day constitutes an epoch in the history and genealogy of blessing. It was the wondrons method of carrying out the gracious purposes of eternity. It was there the rough material was bought at awful cost. It was then there gushed forth with the blood and water from the Saviour's side the silver stream of blessing, the praises of which we desire this night to sins. Every trembling penitent and humble saint can read o'er Calvary's cross "from this day will I bless you." But the day whose blessing I want to tell is the dav when the result of the two previous ones mentioned becomes *actually* ours. Not the day in which the rough material is chosen, nor the day on which the purchase price is paid, but rather the day in which the elected, blood-bought stone is raised from the dark quarry and with shoutings of "grace, grace unto it" is triumphantly placed upon the rising walls. In other words the *day of conversion*—the day in which is laid, as far as our experience is concerned, the foundation of our salvation—the day of which we often sing

"Oh, happy day, that fixed my choice,
On Thee, my Saviour and my God;
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad.

Happy day, ! happy day !
When Jesus washed my sins away."

Let us then look at the subject in this light, and to do so we will divide our subject into two divisions, both found in the text. First we have *a specified day*, and secondly we have a *declared blessing* commencing from that day.

I. A SPECIFIED DAY. This blessed day goes by different names in Scripture. It is too glorious to be described by any one alone. I will but mention three. It is termed a day of espousals. It is the day in which Jesus, our Heavenly Bridegroom, wins the heart of His bride. He reveals to her His love—shews her His beauties—tells her of His sufferings for her sake. He woos her by His sighs and tears and agonies, and lays siege to her heart on every side, whilst His lips drop honey words of loving kindness. Unable to resist such heavenly importunity, she finds her prejudices melting fast away; one barrier after another is broken down, and at last allured by the magnetic power of His love, she gives herself to Him, and with tears of joy exclaims, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." Oh, happy day, when the soul is espoused to Christ. All heaven looks on and rings a marriage peal, whilst sweetest music fills the new-born heart. This day is also spoken of as the "day of power." This gives us a different view of the same transaction. It is a mighty act to convert a sinner, infinitely beyond the power of man, and glorifying even to the omnipotence of God. The sinner has been a rebel in arms, defying his God to the battle. There has been, if I may so express it, many a skirmish, in which the Lord has withheld His great strength. He has but struck lightly, and the sinner has been astonished and dismayed—but now in this day He cometh forth to certain victory. The strong man armed, may fight with all the fury of despair but, 'tis a hopeless conflict, for the "stronger than he" has taken the field against him, and taken it to win. Rampart after rampart is taken—stronghold after stronghold is carried. Before His mighty blows doors of adamant give way and bars of brass and steel are shivered. And now the combatants have met, one sweep of the awful sword breaks down the uplifted shield and cleaves the boasted helmet. It is the day of the Lord's power, and conquered at His feet the rebel cries "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "God be merciful to me a sinner" Behold, mercy triumphs in the triumph. The same hand that struck the rebel down now raises him from the dust. The arm that fetched the blow now brings the balm. He who killed now makes alive, and the repentant singer sings for his defeat

> "Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart,
> Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
> Dissolved by Thy goodness, I fall to the ground,
> And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

This day is moreover spoken of as "the day of salvation." There is no need for me to spend much time on this. The name describes itself. It *is* the day of salvation. It is the day in which the man is saved. The day in which the purposes and plan of salvation receive in him their fulfilment. Glorious day, by whatever name it is called. Would God that every one in this great company had seen it. We will now endeavour to speak a little about this day in detail, and first I would remark:—

This dayoften has a cloudy dawning. As in the creation of nature o in the commencement of grace—the evening and the morning constitute the first day. The day of grace begins before there is actual light. The evening of conviction of sin must be reckoned amongst the hours of the day. And how dark oft-times is this night, and with what lowering clouds does the dawn at last appear. The old adage says "it is always darkest just before dawn." Whether it be so in nature or no, I am not prepared to say, but sure I am of this, that it holds true to the breaking of this blessed day. Just before the light breaks in, the power of darkness makes its most desperate resistance. Just prior to the gladsome entrance of hope, the soul is often nearest to despair, and when standing closest to the frontier of salvation, it feels it trembles nearest hell. Let those who like make little of conviction —we dare not. It is the evening that forms the early hours of the day.

We venture to declare, that only those are pardoned who have seen themselves condemned—only those are saved who have known themselves as lost, and that amid the number of the white robed saints in heaven, there are none but what have worn the sackcloth of repentance. Of course to this I make the exception of the little ones who in their infancy are gathered home. Many there be also, who are quite unable to call to remembrance the experience we have described. Their change has been so gradual, that no clear line is visible between the darkness and the light. But that alters not the fact. The evening may have melted very slowly into day, but there *was* the evening to melt; and if you ask them now, they will with tears plead guilty to every sin, and say, they were but hell-deserving wretches when first the grace of God appeared to them, though when the grace of God appeared in all its fulness they cannot now determine.

There are many here this evening now experiencing the darkness prior to the dawn. Legal terrors affright them. Past sins appal them, and doubts and fears rend their hearts with anguish. They see their need of a Saviour, but not the Saviour whom they need. They behold a hell that yawns to engulph them, but not the road that leads from the wrath to come. Their sins stare them in the face, and dazzle them by their scarlet hue, but at present they cannot perceive the blood that washes white as snow. All the lightnings of Sinai flash before them, and its deep thunder they hear rolling over head, but as yet they have been unable to leave Sinai for Calvary, or hear the sound "that mercy utters from the cross." With them it is a season of gloom and struggle. Night and Day are doing battle in their breast, and no wonder is it if their soul be torn asunder between such mighty combatants. Satan, seeing he is about to lose them, makes one final horrid effort to retain them, and their case becomes the same as that of the lad possessed with the devil who *as he was yet a coming to Jesus.* was hurled to the ground, and torn by the demon within. The most crushing falls and the most dreadful tearings are those the sinner has as he comes. Few, if any, find that the blessed day of our text commences as a "morning without clouds."

Now, dear friends, and I speak to those of you who are anxious, is there not here something to comfort you and cheer your hearts? Your sorrow of soul is only the dawn, your tears are only the harbingers

of morning. There was a time when you felt none of these things; when you lived in a deathly calm. Would you like to return to it? "Ah no," I hear you reply, "painful though it be, it is better than *that*. Sooner would I spend years of anguish seeking Him than be dead to all desire." True, dear friend, but believe me, the time of thy rejoicing is at hand. The very darkness of thy night tells me the dawn is nigh. Doth thy heart cry out as one of old from Seir, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" Listen then to the answer, "The watchman said, *The morning cometh.*" Thou wilt yet thank God for thy griefs, and praise Him for thy sorrows, Think not, dear friend, there is no "blessed day" for thee—there is! the hour of dawn is just about to chime, for this the brightest of days usually has the darkest of dawnings.

This day often has a secret dawning. I now desire to say a few words of encouragement to an exceedingly large class of christians—a class I have already in a prevous sentence alluded to—those who cannot say exactly how or when they were converted. Every minister of the gospel is sure to have many come to him in anxiety, because they lack the clear remembrance many possess of the day of their espousals. Foolishly they fear they can never have been converted at all, as they are unable to say it was then and it was there. Am I speaking to such now? My dear friend, there is no cause why this should trouble you. If you know it is daylight with you now, what does it matter as to what precise moment the dawn first broke; yea, I doubt if there are any of God's saints who do know the *precise moment.* They know the time when first they were conscious of the light, but before that there had been the breaking of the day. Can you tell me the exact moment when this morning commenced? Where there are two consecutive minutes in which you could say "now it is night," and "now it is day." No! imperceptibly the darkness melted into dawn, undetected by your eye the night began to ebb, and the light to flow. Will you say on this account there is no day? You cannot, there are a thousand things that prove it. You see its light—you feel its warmth—you have done its work. So it is with your spiritual life. You are not what you were—your loves and fears and hopes are the very reverse of what they used to be. You see things you once saw not—you feel things you once felt not—you delight to do things you once did not. "Old things have passed away, all things have become new." Rejoice in the light, dear friend and be glad in the day, for it is not one whit the less real, because its dawning was too secret for thee to detect.

Sometimes this day has an early, and sometimes a long delayed dawn. God has no fixed age at which to convert. I grant that the vast majority are brought to the Lord in the days of youth and early manhood, but at the same time there is no restriction to that age. The sun rises not at the same hour all the year round. Sometimes the early hours witness his glory, and at another season, those hours are dark as night, and it is left to later ones to see his light. So is it in grace. Now it is the child in whose heart the dawn breaks, and now the aged white haired sinner. I would here remark, that sometimes the sun rises *very* early in the soul. Far earlier I believe than

many think. There is, we know, a certain class of christians—a class that we hope is lessening daily—which makes it a point to sneer at the idea of children christians. "Pack of stuff," they say "what can *they* know about these things, they don't know their own minds yet." And when the little ones are received into the Church, these wiseacres shake their silly heads, and say, "it will be the ruin of the Church." For a soul not to have been permitted by God to wallow in sin before conversion, seems to them rather a pity and drawback.

I think those who know the most of Churches will bear me out in saying, that it is not these little ones who generally bring disgrace upon their profession, but the contrary. At all events, it is *summer* when the sun rises early, and *winter* when it rises late; and who would not rather have the long bright day than the short day, too often cold? We have known christians of seven years of age, whose piety it would be atrocious to doubt, and whose devotion and consecration would put many of riper years to the blush.* Yes, thank God, in childhood's day the blessed day may have its dawn. But it *can* rise late. Long may anxious friends have cried, "Watchman what of the night?" Long may the answer have been, "'Tis dark, 'tis dark, 'tis murky dark," and yet, just when despair was about to set in, and hope fly, the joyful sound has been heard in the aged sinner's heart, "the morning cometh." Almost all ages have known a dawn.

This day, like all others, has a silent dawn. It is seen but not heard. "Stay" says one, "is that correct? Can I not hear the cock crowing and the tramp of the labourers going to their work. Is not that the dawn?" No, it is the *result* of the dawn, but not the dawn itself. If I may so express it, when she comes to ope the gates of light, and unbar the doors of day, she comes with a tread so light, that it shakes not the dew from the blade of grass, and she draws the bolts so silently, the keenest power of hearing finds the silence still unbroken. As silently as the snow melts upon the hill side, revealing, by slow degrees, the verdure that it covered, does the darkness of night depart. The work of grace within the heart can be perceived by its results, but not heard in its working. One yonder sighs, and says, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Thanks for it, it is the music of the dawn; but before that cry was heard, the dawn *had* come. "Lord save, or I perish," prays another. Precious prayer, the dawn has given it birth, but not it the dawn. May be the very one, who is now sitting by your side, has within his heart the breaking of day, but do you hear it? Like the dawn, grace comes with noiseless step.

The dawning of this day, like the dawning of all other days, is irresistible. Who can say to the advancing morn. "thus far but no

* The preacher knew a little girl of this age, who, on her death bed, asked to see him. He could have remained a week to hear the words of ardent love that fell from her thin white lips about her Saviour. On his saying to her, "Well dear, would you not like to get well," she replied "O no, I hope I shall not." Why not? "Because," she sweetly answered, "ever since I have been a Christian, I have been trying to get my father to come and hear the gospel, and have never been able to succeed, but if I *die*, he *must* come to my funeral, and then over my open grave you will have an opportunity to tell it him, and I would willingly die, if it was only to bring him beneath the sound of the word." Surely this speaks for itself. The noon came early as well as the dawn.

further." Suppose all the parliaments of the world should decree that the dawn of the following day should fail. What effect would it have? Why, whilst they were resolving, the rosy light would come, and gliding through the windows of "the house," would gently laugh in the faces of the senators, and bid them see their folly. Were all the armies of the earth to gather themselves together to war with the advancing dawn, it would but shine upon their weapons, and tell them they had no arms to combat her. So is it with grace in the heart. No power of earth or hell, or both combined, can delay for one moment the day of God's power. Scoffing shop-mates may say of the newly-converted hand, "we will soon laugh that out of him," but they will find their boast is vain. *If* the work be of God, it must stand. O, persecutors and opponents of the convert, your opposition is miserably futile. Go place bit and bridle on the dawn, and hold it back *before* you talk of arresting the onward march of this blessed day in the weakest saint.

The dawn is but the commencement of the day. There is a vast difference between the misty beauty of the early morning and the magnificent glory of the noon tide. Yet they are but one day. The morning is the noon in childhood, and the noon is but the dawn fully developed. There is yet a greater difference between the trembling sinner, as he casts himself, in half despair, upon the atonement, and the same soul, as he stands in white before the throne, and yet the two things are but the result of the same grace. When he sought the Lord with tears, it was grace in the bud, and when he stands arrayed in glory it is the same grace in full bloom. The one leads to the other as surely as the dawn ripens into day.

And now, before we pass into the second part of our subject, for which only a few minutes remain, I want to ask my soul and yours one question of supreme importance. *Have we ever known this day in our own experience?* Has this red letter—this never-to-be-forgotten day dawned upon us? May the Lord help us now to answer this question as in His sight, and if we are obliged, out of truthfulness, to say "*No*," let the prayer now arise, "O, Thou, who didst say in creation's morn, 'Let light be,' speak the word to me, and concerning my benighted heart, may rejoicing angels cry 'Behold the dawn.'"

II. A DECLARED BLESSING. I shall only be able to give you the outlines of this part of the sermon, and leave it to you, in quiet meditation, to fill up the details. "I will bless you." A sermon might be preached from every word. "I." Behold here the person who blesses—The God of heaven. "Will." Behold here the certainty. "Bless." Behold here the promise. What does not this word include? "You." Behold here the condescension. We will, however, take it as a whole, and try, in a few words, to show what the blessing is. It includes, first—*all spiritual blessings.* Is pardon a blessing? It comes with the dawn of this day, for in its hours the soul hears with joy, "Thy" sins, which were many, are all forgiven. Is peace a blessing? It is on this day that Jesus walks upon the troubled waters of the soul as He did on the waves of the lake of Tiberias, and says, "Peace be still," and at his word there becomes a great calm. It is a blessing to be adopted into God's family. From this day the sinner can look up

and say with truth, "My Father, which art in heaven." Time would fail to tell of all the spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in Christ Jesus. The rosy hand of morn as it unbars the gates of light throws open at the same time the treasury of God, and says to the new illumined one, "Take what thou wilt." "Take what thou wilt." But this blessing is not confined to only mercies for the soul. *It rests on all our temporal affairs.* Do you say "How?" I answer "It makes our little much and our much a great deal more. The dry crust with His blessing satisfies far more than the banquet without it, and comforts with it are multipled a thousand fold. Doubtless you have often had in your hand the ripe fruit and admired its beauty. But was it not "the bloom" upon the fruit that gave it, in your eyes, its especial loveliness? Yes—God's blessing is the bloom that rests upon His gifts. This blessing, moreover, sanctifies our troubles—removes the sting from our trials—and takes away the bitterness of our grief It abides upon our persons—dwells in our homes—descends upon our experiences.

Lastly, *it extends to all future things.* I can imagine one of you saying, "If it commences from this day how far does it reach?" Let us take a few steps and see. The first step is to the sick bed. To that all of us must come. Does the blessing extend to here? Listen! "Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness," or as it may be translated "Thou wilt turn his bed," even as the considerate nurse. The blessing reaches here. Let us take the next step. It is to the death bed. Can you ask if His blessing abides here? The triumphant happy departure of a host that no man can number declares it to be so. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Shall we take another step? It is to the grave. Lo! here we find the blessing, for the victory of the grave has gone, and it is now but the quiet resting place of dust that is dear to God, and which He will raise again at the resurrection morning. One step more, and it is the last. Heaven! Here is the blessing that dates from the conversion day crowned, for I read there is no curse there. Blessing. and nought but blessing, fills the heavenly courts. Oh! what a happy thought it is that in the day we have been talking about, a seed of blessing is sown that shall bloom with increasing splendour throughout the ages of eternity. Poor sinner, attracted by this thought cry out this evening, "Lord, give the dawn— Lord, give the dawn, even to this dark heart, for Jesus' sake." Amen.

Scripture Read—Acts 16th to 34th verse.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—607—786—658.

We should feel under a deep debt of gratitude to every reader who would kindly do his best to extend the circulation of our Printed word where it is already read, and communicate with us about its introduction into fresh neighbourhoods.

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
17, Bancroft Road, Mile End Road, E.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

BETTER THAN A MOTHER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."—
ISAIAH xlix—15

THE almost infinite variety of Scripture is one cause for its never-varying charm. Every experience, and every shade of every experience finds its representation in this blessed book. There is something for all and something to suit all. Some sweet portion that is certain to dovetail into the most singular experiences of God's most peculiar people. The desires and emotions of the heart, too great for utterance, find their expression here, and the most anxious questionings of the soul find their answers in its pages. We can turn to it and hear said for us what we wanted to say, but could not in our own language describe, and hear what we desired to hear, but which could be heard nowhere else. Is the soul full to overflowing with joy, does mercy seem so great that the spirit in vain tries language to express its bliss—does it have to say, with good old John Berridge:—

"Then my tongue would fain express
All Christ's love and loveliness;
But I lisp and falter forth
Broken words not half His worth."

Then turning to the pages of this book, it finds its song already written and set to sweetest melody, and it sings, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name, bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." On the other hand, is the experience the very reverse of this happy one—does depression and sorrow unnerve the man, and does he with tears try and think of some strong cordial for a fainting soul. He finds his experience photographed, and the cordial mentioned in the inspiring words of the same psalmist. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God! for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." The same is true if his experience be one of care. Restless he walks, trying in vain to escape the burden that breaks at the same time

his spirit and his back; he finds he may as well run from his own shadow. Now he stops in his restless efforts after self-release and begins to sink into the idleness of despair. Yet is there no relief. His face may appear with a deceptive calm, bnt eating into his very vitals, and hurrying him to an early grave is that same cancer of concealed care. As a last hope—and it should have been his first—he turns to the book of God, to see if there is anything therc ean meet so desperate a case as his. With what a revulsion of feeling does he read, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee," or "Casting all your care on Him, for He careth for you." More precious than ever does the book become; it was his dove with the olive branch amid the deluge of his griefs.

But I can imagine one of you saying, "My trouble is not from things without, but from a dark and hideous thought within. The thought is this:—"my Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. His former mercies appear brightest by their contrast to my present gloom. His loving-kindness seems to have departed from me, and I fear me I am as a dead man, forgotten and out of sight. Is there a passage that will suit my case, and re-assure me of his love and kind remembrance." There is; you will find it in this morning's text, and if it come but home to your heart as it has to the speaker's, you will bless God for it, and find a solace and a joy unutterable. The verse breathes sympathy and beams with unchanging love. In it we have stretching out before us a green pasture of richest food, through which there flows the sweetest water of quietness. May Jehovah Jesus, the great shepherd of his sheep, now place himself at our head, and lead us to the spots where the sweetest pastures grow, and deepest waters flow. May he now make his flock to rest at noon, and shadow with his presence the weakest of his sheep. The text itself is all that can be desired, there is music in every word, and a heavenly fragrance in every sentence. It is an alabaster box full of the most precious ointment for wounded spirits. May the Holy Spirit break it open, and fill this house this morning with its refreshing perfume.

There are in the verse two things that shall form our divisions. First you have *almost an impossibility*, for a mother to forget her child. Secondly you have *an utter impossibility*, for the Lord to forget his people. Our subject is you will perceive the superiority of an "utter" over an "almost" impossibility. Let us then to the subject.

I. Almost an Impossibility. If it is not an impossibility for a woman to forget her sucking child it is certainly next door to one, and the Lord could not have obtained any higher earthly illustration of his tenderness and love. In order to show it you will see the Lord has pressed into his service a variety of words, all serving to increase the beauty of the simile. There are many little touches in the description that call for our special notice as they all give an extra intensity to God's own picture of his tenderness. We will commence at the first word "woman." What thoughtfulness is here displayed, and what condescension. God who made the heart of woman as well as man, knows that there is a tenderness in her disposition exceeding that of man's, and therefore he chooses the highest type to illustrate His sympathy.

If for a moment or two we dwell upon the pity that characterises woman, it is but to open up more fully the beauty of the comparison. We would reveal the height of the type in order that the full significance of the God-chosen illustration may be beheld. That there is in woman a tenderness of heart and a susceptibility to others' sorrows exceeding that found in man, none of us who have wives can doubt. Some unknown stranger perhaps comes to our house (with some of us this takes place nearly every day) and pours into our ears a long, long, tale of misery, want, and wretchedness—sick children—pawned clothes and back rent. We hear the tale respectfully, but without any great emotion, for the simple reason we have been taken in and completely "done" so many times before, and have so strong an impression that this is but a similar imposture that the heart is hardened. We are about to utter the final negative to all requests, when the wife comes in; she hears with tears the tale that left our heart unmoved. The sick children awaken all the woman's sympathies, and the stranger leaves rejoicing in the fortune that gave him a woman's ear into which to plead his cause. Very likely she was deceived, and you tell her so, but with a smile she answers, "Let it be so, better give to nine bad cases and one good one, than let the one suffer for the sake of the nine; besides, think of those little ones, can we let *them* want, when our own have everything." What can you say to such logic? Why nothing, you may remain unconvinced, but you would not have that womanly tenderness of heart abated for the world.

I have been much surprised with the manifestation of this dominant feeling of womanhood in conversation about the horrible war now raging. Listen to a number of men as in some railway carriage they try and beguile the time with talk. What is the staple subject? They discuss the comparative merits of the generals, and the superiority or otherwise of the various weapons of destruction. The strategical positions are explained or supposed to be, the bloody conflicts of the day are discussed with gusto if with horror. Strong expressions are employed and stern measures described. The pomps and pageantry of war seem in a measure to veil its sorrows. Now listen to a number of ladies conversing about the same war. What is the chief theme? You hear but little of the generals, weapons or strategy; their subject is the widows and orphans left, the homes made desolate and the hearts broken, the wounded in the hospitals, and the best way to make lint for them, or send succour to them. The woman's heart instinctively dwells upon the sorrowing and suffering side of the picture, rather than on the martial glory.

So should it be, the sphere of pain and grief is the sphere in which she shines the most. The abodes of sorrow and the wards of a hospital are where her powers know no rival. Hers the hand to smooth the pillow, give the medicine, and gently change the bandages, whilst at the same time, with words as delicate as her touch, she strives to heal the wounded spirit. Works of mercy are her mission, and in their performance the whole attributes of her character are seen delighting themselves in their natural element.

Behold then the beauty of the simile. God longing to convey to Israel's doubting heart some faint idea of His own matchless tenderness, selects as His illustration the compassionate heart of a woman. What a lesson does this read to some. What a rebuke does it give to those who seem to imagine that the one thing they have to veil as a thing of shame is a soft place in the heart. Have we not all met some who seemed to imagine that the only way to be manly was to be harsh, and the only proof of manhood to be an utter want of tenderness of character? Men who count sympathy a proof of "softness," and delicacy of feeling a weakness of the head—men who sneeringly term anything that displays a heart less hard than a stone wall "*womanish*." It would be a good thing for many men if they *were* more womanish than they are—if to be womanish means to have a heart open to the cares of others, and a disposition finding its joys in efforts to lighten the burden. If there be such present, let them blush as they hear the God of heaven and earth describing His own affections by the heart of a woman.

But the illustration goes higher. It is not merely the tenderness of the woman, but the tenderness of the woman who is a *mother*. God not only employs the highest type, but the highest specimen of that type. Mother! Mother! Mother! What associations of loving tenderness are in the very name. Mother! The word touches a secret spring in the heart, and conjures back scenes of the past. It brings to view in the dim distance a sweet face that used to bend over our little cot at eventide, and impress a kiss upon our brow. It reminds of one who used to smile when we were happy, and weep when obliged to correct us. It calls to remembrance one who always seemed interested in our little tales of adventure, and never laughed at our little sorrows, that seemed to us so large. Mother! it was her face we gazed last upon when we went away to school, and it was into her arms we first rushed when the holidays brought us home. Mother! It was the thought of her that kept us in the house of business, and held us back from sin with unseen silken cords; and when those dark locks of hers became silvered with advancing age, we only thought an extra charm had crowned her brow. With many present that mother has long since fallen asleep in her Saviour's arms, but you forgot not the love that was strong as death, and escaped from her dying lips in wordsyou treasure to this day. Forget? No! Her name has still a magic power, and the tears I see rolling down so many cheeks this morning are eloquent in their language. They declare that at least one word has neither lost its music or its charm, and that one word is *mother*.

I think I cannot better show the hold the memory of a mother has upon a man, than by quoting the words of Bishop Thompson. Says he "Mother! how many delightful associations cluster around that word. When my heart aches at the world's wickedness, and my limbs are weary and my feet bloody, travelling the thorny path of life, I am accustomed to sit down on some mossy stone, and closing my eyes on real scenes, to send my spirit back to the days of early life. I

sing my lullaby, or watch my goldfinch, or walk the streets of my native town, or look over the green. I feel afresh my infant joys and sorrows till my spirit recovers its tone, and is willing to pursue its journey. But in all these reminiscences *my mother rises.* If I seat myself upon my cushion, it is at her side; if I sing, it is to her ears, if I walk the meadows, my little hand is in my mother's, and my little feet keep company with hers; if I stand and listen to the piano, it is because my mother's fingers touches the keys; if I survey the wonders of creation, it is my mother who points out the object of my admiring attention. There is no velvet so soft as a mother's lap, no rose so lovely as her smile, no path so flowery as that imprinted with her footsteps." Thus wrote a bishop willingly testifying to the unbroken spell of a mother's affection. Thousands could bear the same testimony, though perhaps in less graceful language. It was but the other evening I read in one of the daily papers a touching anecdote bearing upon our subject. After one of the recent battles a German soldier was seen supporting himself by grasping the top of a stone wall. The poor fellow had been shot through the body, and his life blood was pouring from him fast. A fellow soldier coming to him said, "Well comrade, is there anything I can do for you." "Yes," answered the dying man, "write to this address." "Willingly," said the friend, "but what shall I say." "Say, 'Dear mother'"—but whilst he uttered that last word, his hand relaxed its hold, and he sank a corpse into a pool of gore. A short letter that, but how full of pathos. Amid dead and dying, with life fast ebbing, the thought that lingered longest with the soldier was *his mother.* There is one feature in a mother's love that must be mentioned, as it constitutes, I think, the chiefest beauty of the type. Her love is not a love drawn forth by prosperity or dispelled by adversity. She loves her son not because of what he has, but because of what he is. He is *her* boy, and in that statement you have the secret of her love. Many present either have or have had butterfly friends. When successful they are so numerous it is a difficulty to count them; and when adversity sets in it is even more difficult to reckon them, only from a different cause—they have all vanished. But amidst changing scenes, and consequently changing frieuds, who is it that has remained the same, or rather who is it whose tenderness has seemed to increase with your trials? Why, your mother. Your prosperity never had anything to do with her affection, so its loss cannot alter her feelings towards you. To whom would any of us go to tell our troubles, when through adverse circumstances we had been pushed back and back and back until we were driven right against the wall? Why, to our mother. We need not fear to tell her the very worst. All she will think of is that the one against the wall is her own boy, and to desert him in his trial will never once enter her thoughts. O matchless, unselfish, undying love, love uninfluenced by any circumstance! where can we find thine equal? Nowhere but in Him who has stooped to make this love the illustration of His own.

Thus you will see God uses the sympathy of the woman, and that woman a mother, to reassure Israel of His own unalterable affection.

There is yet one other delicate touch in the picture which gives to it the perfection of beauty. The tenderness described is not only that of a woman, or even that of a mother, but of a mother towards her *sucking* child. This crowns the description, and should drive away the last remnant of unbelief. Think for a moment of the conclusiveness of the argument. I *can* imagine a mother sometimes forgetting her grown-up son, who has long since attained the age of manhood, and is himself the head of a family. I *can* believe that the daughter married into some other family and well provided for, is not always in the thoughts of her mother, but it is almost impossible to conceive the sucking child for a moment forgotten. Its very life is dependant on the mother's thoughtfulness, and its utter helplessness becomes its security. Yea, she could not forget it even if she desired; nature itself would become a sharp reminder, and her own pain would plead her infant's cause. Forget a sucking child? The cries of the little one would be sufficient to awaken the sleeping memory. Behold, dear friends, how God has strengthened his illustration by every possible means. Not a circumstance that could give force to the argument has been omitted. Beginning high with the tenderness of a woman, he ascends step by step to the climax of a mother's love for her infant at the breast. Then comes the question "Can she forget?" There is a moment's pause, and the answer is heard, "she may." Yes, improbable though it be, it is not impossible—although *almost* an impossibility it yet fails to reach an utter impossibility. Mothers may forget their sucking children. They can do so in two ways, either literally, or by acting as if they had.

Let us take the last mentioned way first. Sometimes as if to afford an awful illustration of the complete depravity of the human race, there comes a revelation that shocks society—such a one as has just taken place at Brixton. Some baby farm has its secrets torn from its breast, and we read of infants sold like lambs; and whilst we read we find ourselves mistaking the word *mother*, and reading it *monster*. The workhouses can bear the same testimony. The little fouudlings picked up by the watchmen off the steps cry in their piteous tones, "They may forget." Sad truth, but still a truth, exceptions *are* found even in maternal love. But apart from this dark side of the picture, "They may forget," and that literally. In yonder room there lies a mother, burnt up and parched with fever, for a season her mind wanders, and in her delirium she talks the wildest nonsense; her children's voices are heard by others in the adjoining room, but she notices them not. Though the tenderest and most thoughtful of mothers in health, she has now forgotten all, and the cry of the infant fails to arrest her attention. Thus you see in the golden chain of a mother's memory there may be a false link that shall snap in the strain. In the almost universal beauty of the mother's love there *are* dark blots and black exceptions. The almost impossibility breaks down in the trial. Sin and sickness both declare the woman can forget her sucking child, and fail to have compassion on the son of her womb.

Thus much for the first point, on which I have dwelt longer than I at first intended. Let us turn to the second, and behold—

II. AN UTTER IMPOSSIBILITY. The true magnitude of an object can only be understood by comparison, and it is by contrast the mind grasps the reality. It is only in this way the grand proportions of the mountain range can be perceived. Their very hugeness serves but to deceive the eye, and diminish in appearance their stupendous height. In order to realise the altitude of that topmost peak you must view the successive tiers of hill-tops that it overlooks. The first of these would make the highest building but a molehill in comparison—but look, there are three, four, yes five other summits rising like giant steps, and still towering far aloft, and looking down upon the highest of them in disdain, the snow-crowned peak erects its head. It is only now the dizzy height is understood. So is it in our text. We have been directing your attention to the different ranges of a woman's and a mother's love, in order that in some measure you might understand the height of God's love. As we stood at the foot of the hill and gazed upon the summit of a mother's tenderness towards her sucking child, we were ready to exclaim, "can anything o'ertop this?" Yes, for look yonder—rising like an Alpine—or rather like a peak of the Himaleh, and dwarfing into insignificance every other hill and mountain top, there stands the eternal love of Jehovah to His people, the apex of which is high as heaven's eternal throne. These lower ranges may be scaled and measured, but this never,

"God only knows the love of God."

Its height and depth, its length and breadth defy all measurement· "They may forget, *Yet*," and it is this word that shoots aloft beyond all human sight, "will I not forget thee." I will now give just a few reasons that make forgetfulness on the part of God an utter impossibliity. I wiil give them you in outline and leave the filling in of detail to private meditation. *His nature forbids it.* We have already shown you that the secret of a mother's love is her being a mother. A mother's nature must love, but her nature, like the nature of all, is depraved, and the best of human love is but human love at best; however high her love may reach it can never reach perfection, because her nature lacks it, and the stream can never flow higher than the fountain. But with God it is the reverse, in Him you have infinite perfection, and the stream rises to the fountain. "God is love." Who can fathom that declaration, who understand it in all its fulness? Not 'loving'—poor mortal can be that—but love, love itself. Now if imperfect love renders the forgetfulness of the child almost an impossibility, how complete must the impossibility be when that love is the love of one who *is* love. His *promises* forbid it. There is one thing that even God cannot do—He cannot lie. Now were He to forget a child of His, some of the most precious promises of the word would be violated and become mere waste type—listen but to some of them—"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving

kindness; and in mercies." "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; we shall not be ashamed nor confounded; world without end." "The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." These and a hundred other like precious promises all declare it is impossible for God to forget His people.

The travail of the Redeemer's soul is alone sufficient argument, that they for, whom it was endured shall be remembered. Men forget not that which cost them much, but what was ever procured at so dreadful a price, as "the church which he hath purchased with His blood." Gethsemane's horror of darkness and cup of agony—Pilate's hall and bloody scourging—Calvary's cross and shameful death—these all have too deeply engraved upon His memory the names of those for whom he suffered to allow them ever to become forgotten.

His honour renders it an utter impossibility. If a man be worthy of the name, there is something that he values more than wealth, position or aught beside, something before losing which he would part with all. I mean his honour. Shall man be careful and God indifferent to His honour? Never! for our God is "a jealous God." The roll of the chosen and the glorified *must* agree. Did one redeemed soul through its Redeemer's forgetfulness find its way to hell, the infernal regions would have its laugh at heaven's expense. That shall never be.

"His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep;
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.

Nor death nor hell shall e'er remove
His favourites from his breast;
In the dear bosom of His love,
They *must* for ever rest.

Cheer up then, every poor disconsolate heart. *God remembers thee.* Listen yet again to His words. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee."

Scripture read—Isaiah XLIX.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book"—912—731—735.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHAT SHALL I GIVE HIM?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 23RD, 1870, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?"
PSALM CXVI—12.

As I observed in reading this psalm at the commencement of the present service, we are not informed under what circumstances it was written, or what were the peculiar troubles the deliverance from which inspired the sweet singer of Israel to pen these joyful verses. The language of thankfulness is such that it will beautifully suit any grateful soul, let his mercies be what they may. The psalmist may have referred to some special mercy, such as succour from his enemies or restoration to health after a dangerous sickness, in which the sorrows of death compassed him, and the pains of the grave gat hold upon him; or else the whole psalm may be the result of a general view of his God's loving-kindness towards him through life.

It is perhaps a good thing that the particular subject of praise is thus left unmentioned, as it becomes more easily applicable to the present experience of God's saints. It is sufficient for us to know that David had been in some trouble and calamity; it is sufficient for us to know that in that trouble he did the wisest thing he could, "he called upon the name of the Lord;" it is sufficient for us to know that when he cried the Lord heard him and delivered him; and it is enough for us to know that overflowing with gratitude for so great a mercy, he exclaimed, "What shall I render unto the Lord?" When David wrote this psalm he was enjoying one of those happy experiences which, alas, are too much like angels' visits "few and far between." Thankfulness and holy joyfulness absorbed every other thought. It was no question with him whether he would praise the Lord or no, he was bound to, and he could no more resist the impulse than the lark can restrain the song as it mounts aloft. He had been in the horrible pit of depression, and stuck fast in the miry clay of foreboding fears, but now he was clean escaped from both, and with his feet planted on a rock he found a new song placed upon his lips. Oh what a happy thing it is to hear the involuntary melody of a heart tuned to Jehovah's praises. Nothing happier, except to have that musical heart beating in one's own breast.

It is a remarkable thing in relation to the sayings of this blessed book that they never become worn out or outgrown. Their freshness

abides and the dew of their youth ever remains upon them. No spiritual experience has so advanced as to get beyond the expressions of holy writ. They are just as applicable now as when first breathed, and their words are as exact an echo to the saint's feelings of this century as they were to the feelings of the inspired bard, prophet, or apostle who first uttered them. It was but the other day I was reading a paragraph in a religious publication that serves as an illustration to this thought. An Alpine traveller, in company with a shepherd as a guide, had reached a dizzy height among the snowy peaks of the mountain range, when his guide asked him to stop and listen to a remarkable echo. Raising his shepherd's horn to his mouth, he blew a blast that startled the silence; the notes seemed to die away without producing any mountain music, and the traveller was just about to express his disappointment when: — at first in gentle strains the echo became audible. It was soon taken up and flung from side to side, until it seemed as if every icy peak and glassy precipice had found a tongue. Softened and mellowed by the glittering sounding board, the music ascended in circles and broke in wavelets of harmony on every hand, until up to its highest peak that appeared enamelled on the sky, the whole mountain was draped with seraphic harmony. So is it in the mountain of the Lord's house. A shepherd King sounds a simple note of grateful praise. For a season perhaps the words seem to die away in silence, but then echoed and re-echoed not by icy pinnacles, but glowing hearts, they are heard on every hand. This echo never dies away, but swelling in grandeur as time flies, it outlives time itself, and when the fiat has gone forth that "time shall be no more," the note shall still be heard in the heavenly courts, loud as the sound of many mighty rushing waters, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." "Unto Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen."

Let us this morning, by the Master's help, "catch up the strain and send the echo back again." Let our hearts join in the noble work of sounding forth the praises of our God. Begone now all unbelief, all coldness and all deadness. Rising up from our inherent selfishness, and viewing only our manifold mercies, let the Psalmist's question become ours, and his answer too. There are three things in the verse that will serve us for matter of meditation. They are, first—*The desire that prompts the question.* Secondly—*The question itself;* and thirdly —*The only answer that can be given to the question.*

Let us then commence at the desire that gives vent to itself in the question of our text, and before we talk of the stream, try and describe the fountain from which it flows. What was it that prompted David ever to ask such a question? It was a desire to show that he was not insensible to the multitude of God's mercies bestowed upon him. Were we able to have looked into his heart at the time he wrote these words, I think we should have found some such thoughts and meditations as these:—"O, my God, I have been wonderfully blessed by Thee—Surely none owe Thee a deeper debt than I—Thou hast poured

out of thy mercy upon me in a most marvellous manner—My soul hast thou delivered from death, mine eyes hast thou wiped from tears, and my very feet have been held in thy paths—All I am and all I have is of Thee, and only Thee; but O, my God, I fear lest I should receive Thy mercy as my birth right, and take Thy gifts as my due—I fear lest base ingratitude should betray me, and a cold insensibility benumb me—I tremble, lest like an open grave I should swallow up all Thy benefits and make as little return—Selfishly accept the gifts, but show no gratitude to the Giver." Some thoughts such as these doubtless passed through his mind, and anxious to clear himself of so horrible a suspicion, he exclaims, in the language of the text, "What shall I render unto the Lord."

Alas, how prone are we all to get, but never give. Grumble if one mercy be withheld, but withhold our song, though a thousand benefits be freely granted. Too many of us are like the barren rock, wet with the dew of heaven's mercy, and warmed with the sun of heaven's favor, and yet as unproductive in return. But still, far though we fall short of the gratitude that is His due, there will yet be in the heart of every saint at least the same desire after thankfulness. *It seems to be a law of nature, that some return should be made for benefits received.* Look abroad into the fair face of creation, and you will discover no selfishness there. Yonder is a field that once was covered with a sward like velvet, but a long drought has been, and now the fresh greenness has departed, and given place to a brownish yellow; on every hand the ground is seamed with gaping cracks, that appear as so many thirsting mouths calling for their drink. The cattle in vain search for food, dust there is plenty, but pasture none. But lo! the weather changes. Black clouds gather over head, and for a whole week let fall the welcome rain. It runs into the cracks and soaks into the soil. The thirsty field has drunk it all. Does it make no return? Walk into that meadow a few days after and see. The green blades again point their fingers to the sky from which the showers of blessing came, and the daisy lifts up its pale but lovely face in silent thankfulness. The meadow has made its return for the benefits it received. The sun pours its golden light upon the garden, a thousand plants are warmed and nourished by its rays. Do they make no return? Look at those opening buds and see, and when the whole garden is one mass of bloom, and every shade of colour blends in harmonious contrast with the leafy shade, learn how nature gives loveliness for light. You will perceive the same thing if you will turn to the animal creation. The Arab steed neighs with delight when his master comes nigh its stall, and the dog licks the hand that has patted its head. Shall inanimate nature and the lower creatures of God's handiwork put His saints to the blush? Shall the grass of the field and the beast of the stall put to shame the trees of the Lord's right hand planting and the children of the house? Surely not. Unless the heart has become depraved beyond conception, its first impulse must be, if even in some most humble form, to make return for every gift received.

Remember, moreover, that gratitude *can only be shown by making some return.* It is impossible to detect it apart from its results, nay, it is impossible for it to exist without them. I grant that the returns

may be most inadequate, and valued by some standards, perfectly worthless, but there *are* the returns, and such only perhaps as the recipient could give. To some poor wretched starving vagrant, who has nothing in the world but the rags that hang upon his shoulders, you give relief. You ask, what return can he make? If he be grateful, he will give you what he has, perhaps a tear in the eye, or a broken "God bless you sir." Is not that something, and were no word spoken and no look given, would you not justly doubt the fact of his having any feeling of thankfulness whatsoever? Believe me, some of these *poor* returns are the most genuine, and will live in your remembrance when costlier ones are forgotten. That unutterable look the widow gave, as she tried in vain to thank you for the bread you placed in the mouths of her hungry children, was a return that made you feel you had received more than ever you gave. Yes, there is always some way in which gratitude of heart can show itself, and *will* too, if it be there.

Another thing which should heighten in your esteem the grace of thanksgiving, and set you longing to possess more of it, is, that *it is the peculiar privilege of the saint.* None but the saints can praise God aright. It is not every one that can make melody on the flute or lute, nor can any one sound forth the harmonious praises of their God. I freely grant you the wicked are *bound* to praise God, but I am equally certain they are not *fit* to. Praise is the work of a living man, "for the dead cannot praise Him," nor can those who are yet dead in trespasses and sins render any acceptable thanksgiving to God. It is left to His saints, and to them only to bless Him. I suppose there are not many present who have not, with the speaker, often had a shudder run through them, as they have heard the miserable apology for praise, that some godless person has thought it "the proper thing" to make. Who has not heard the cold and discordant note of "God almighty has been very good to me," and whilst you have heard, you felt it was almost next door to an indecency for one, who was living a God-dishonoring life to attempt His praise. It is good old Thomas Watson, in his rare book of "A godly man's picture drawn with a scripture pencil," from which I have gleaned many thoughts this morning, who says, in more pungent and poetical language, "A profane man covered with God's praises, is like a dunghill stuck over with flowers."

Thanksgiving is the highest part of worship. Prayer may, in a great measure, be the offspring of a selfish desire, but praise is the result of an ingenuous heart. Prayer, it has well been said, is like the raven that cries, but praise is like the lark that carols. It is a blessed thing to be able to cry to God, but it is surely a higher act to sing about God. It is a comforting thought that He who hears the raven when it cries, hears us also in our petitions, but it is a soul-inspiring thought that our God bends down and listens with delight to our feeble lays of praise. When upon our knees in prayer we act like men, and like men who feel their emptiness, but when our soul rises in praise we are brought more into harmony with the worship of those who surround the throne, and have nought to do but sing the high praises of Him who brought them there. I think that here is one of the weak points in our public worship as nonconformists. I fear that the sermon

is too often looked upon as the chief part of worship, and the rest as mere accessories, whereas the sermon is no part of worship whatsoever, and should only be valued as it is a means of conveying grace to the hearer. The truest part of worship is the singing, and it is a thousand pities it should be thought so little of, or else only thought of as a musical performance. It is in the united hymn of praise that the congregation reaches the climax of worship.

To borrow another thought from the old puritan I have already quoted. *Thanksgiving and praise is the one thing the Devil cannot do.* It is in this we reach an altitude beyond the power of Hell to attain.

Do you pray? The devils can do this, and have done, and been answered too. They besought Christ, that if they were turned out of the poor possessed man, they might be allowed to enter the herd of swine at hand, and their request was allowed. Do you quote scripture? So can the Devil, and better too, doubtless. In his conflict with our Saviour, he showed he had the word of God on the tip of his tongue, if not in the centre of his heart. Do you believe in God? So do the devils, "and tremble," which is something more than the faith of some present has ever produced. Do you make a profession? So can the Devil, and a fairer one by far than you, for he can transform himself "into an angel of light." But when as a saint, you offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving, you perform an act that Satan cannot do. Hell knows no hallelujahs and perdition can raise no praises. The voice of praise is a heavenly one, and the praising Christian has heaven commenced on earth. Since then it is such a high and blessed thing to have this thankful and thanksgiving spirit. I can imagine, that many present are now asking a question, that I desire for a few minutes to try and answer. It is this—*How may we know when we are truly thankful?* The heart is so deceitful, and we are so ready to be deceived when the deception is, that we possess something that is good, that it will be well for all to put themselves to the test. I think I may say, we have the truly thankful spirit, when *we are quick to see and slow to forget our mercies.* By being quick to see our mercies, I mean, having a disposition that loves to find out mercies that are perhaps at first not apparent. Any one can see the mercy that meets him in the very middle of the path of life, but the truly thankful soul will hunt the hedges that line his road, to see if there is no concealed mercies among the thorns. The character I would describe is the one that always looks for the bright side of every providence, and if unable to find a bright spot, thanks God that it is no darker than it is. Such a spirit may well be illustrated by a little anecdote I was reading this week. A poor woman had two children, but not a bed for them to lie upon, and scarcely clothes to cover them. One winter night, when they were nearly perished with the cold, and half frozen by the bitter wind that found its way into the room, the mother took the door of the cellar off the hinges, and set it up before the corner where the little ones were crouching down to sleep, in order that some of the draught might be kept from them. One of the children whispered to her, as she was complaining of how badly they were off, "Mother, what do those dear little children do, *who have no cellar door* to put in front of them." That little one was quick to see a mercy.

But not only is the truly thankful one quick to see a mercy, but he is also slow to forget it. It is said, that the memory is the part of man that first decays. It is so spiritually. Too prone are we to record our mercies as children do their names upon the sand, to be washed out by the first wave of a new trouble that reaches us. Now the thankful soul treasures his mercies as the physician does his receipts, and in dark and trying times he lives over the bright past again. A person is only truly thankful, *when his heart is in his praises*, and when hie heart is in them, he will never consent to render them by proxy. No organ playing will suffice for the truly thankful soul. He will sing with it, but never let it sing for him, and perhaps will sing truest praise without any of its assistance. No choir can render to God the praises of his soul. He must render them himself. I much question whether organs and choirs have ever been any help in the praise of God. They have doubtless been so to the correct singing of the congregation, but that is a very different thing to true praise. At all events, no earnest soul will take them as its substitute. The idea of any number of little boys performing his thanksgivings for him will only rouse a feeling of indignation. He must sing them out himself, although the heart be in far better tune than the lips. Nothing, however beautiful in itself, can be accepted in the place of hearty worship.

I well remember being, sometime back, in York Minster, and being delighted with the service as a musical treat. Next to me was a poor old woman, who evidently had come to render her thanks to her Lord. She never was in time or tune, but her responses came so deep from her heart, that many turned round in evident displeasure at her great want of taste in allowing her unmusical voice to be heard so distinctly. I could not help feeling on leaving, that the most *real* thing I had witnessed was her worship, and that perhaps in God's ears the most molodious part of the service was that old woman's honest, but unclassical praise. Have heart and music too, if possible, but if in earnest you will have the heart. The heart is truly thankful, when in its praises *there is an absence of all thought of human merit.* That is no true thanksgiving, that says, "I bless God for his mercy, and myself for my shrewdness," or "God has been very good to me, and I feel in some measure I deserve his benefits." No, no. True praise says, "I am not worthy of the least of His mercies." "What am I or my father's house that Thou hast brought me hitherto. Not unto me, O Load, not unto me, but unto Thy name be all the glory." When self creeps in praise creeps out, and in proportion as our song rises into true melody, self will sink in utter abasement.

Before passing on to our second point, let us all put the question home to our souls. "O, my soul, if thou hast nought beside, hast thou the same deep desire that gave birth to David's question, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me"? May the Lord breathe that desire into us, and mightily increase it, if it be already there.

II. Some Thoughts suggested by the Question. "What shall I render"? Here is a question far easier asked than answered. I confess, that when in studying this subject, I asked my soul this

question, and then tried faithfully to answer it, I found myself completely "floored." I found I had all the desire in the world to render something. But *what?*

There are many thoughts that occur to our mind that only make the question a greater difficulty. Think for a moment of the *possessions of God.* Rightly has the text been engraved upon the front of our Royal Exchange, "The Earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," What can mortal man give to his God? How can the exchequer of the creator be enriched by the gifts of the creature? The thought of our God's infinite wealth makes the question of our text appear next door to an impertinence. Listen but to his own words, "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds, for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the world is mine and the fulness thereof." The golden veins of the everlasting hills are his, and the hidden treasures of the deep belong to him. Lift up your eyes on high some starry night, and behold the bespangled firmanent, every glittering speck you see is a rolling world, and every world is the result of His handiwork; He calls them all by their names, and Heaven is but His jewel case. Turn your eyes to a darker region, and you but behold His possessions, for swinging at His girdle are the keys of death and hell.

Now say believer, what thou wilt lay at the feet of Him who can place His hand upon Heaven, Earth and Hell, and say, "all is mine?" But apart from the possessions of our God there is another insuperable difficulty to the answering of the question, and that is *our own poverty.* It it not the rich offering to the richer, nor the wealthy rendering unto the more wealthy, but is perfect poverty talking of making a gift to infinite wealth. Forgetting for a moment the riches that can never be increased, let us ask ourselves "if it were otherwise, *what have we?*" Ransack thy memory, run over thy accounts, find out what you do possess. What is the sum total? Nothing! Nothing!! Nothing!!! We are miserable bankrupts, not worth a jot. The very bread we eat is the bread of charity, and the breath we draw is lent us. It is utter emptiness talking of giving to the perfection of fulness; it is the beggar rendering to the benefactor. There is yet another reason for our being at a *non-plus* in giving an answer, and that is, that were we able to give Him anything it would be but rendering unto Him *what is already His own.* What have we that we have not received? Scripture is most emphatic upon this point, "Ye are not your own, but purchased with a price." When Jesus died upon the cross to redeem His people, or as Peter expresses it, "to purchase" his church, He bought all they were and all they had. Our body, soul and spirit, our time, our talents, our head, our heart, our hands, our mouth, our feet, all belong to Him, so that with every offering we should have to say with David, "Of thine own have we given thee." Now I ask you my dear friends, with these thoughts in your mind, what answer will you make to the question? Surely you can make but one, and that the same one as the Psalmist. This leads us to our third and last division.

III. THE ONLY ANSWER THAT CAN BE GIVEN. "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." As I mentioned in the exposition of this Psalm, when reading it. this has reference to an old Jewish custom. At the close of a meal, the master of the family would take and drink from a cup, called the cup of blessing, in token of his gratitude for the mercies they had received. So the psalmist seems to say. "In token of gratitude for all God's benefits towards me. I will take up the cup of thanksgiving and bless the name of the Lord." The heart's gratitude is all the saint can give in return for mercies that are fresh with every hour, and as numerous as the seconds in the day. But you will reply, "is not that giving to God what He has first bestowed. Is not that very gratitude of soul His gift?" It is, but in His infinite compassion, our Lord is willing to accept, at our hands, that which He has first placed in them O grasp therefore the cup of thanksgiving, and drink it in His courts to His praise. Do not niggardly withhold the only thing you can render. Show that the question you have asked was asked with a purpose, and was no mere heartless mockery. Praise Him, it costs nothing, it is all that you *can do*, and it is just what He is willing to accept. Not to do so is disloyalty to heaven's throne.

But if thanksgiving be good, remember *thanksliving* is better, therefore let thy whole life join in the harmony. There are several ways in which thou mayest take the cup of blessing in thy hand. I will but mention a few, and close the discourse. First—*Give Him your love.* Nothing testifies to gratitude so much. Yea, where this is wanting no true praise can be. Be not afraid of loving Him too much. Fear not being thought a fanatic, or counted an enthusiast. Could you love Him to a flaming passion absorbing every love, you would not love Him half enough. Give Him thy love, He asks for it. He will pardon its weakness, and at the same time increase its power, for he who loves will learn to love. Thou art not grateful if you deny him this. *Consecrate thyself unto His service.* This is another way to render praise. Lay thyself upon His altar. Make no selfish reserve, but live to Him who died for thee. Let the locks of thy dedication to God be thick as Samson's, and see that no Delilah robs thee of them. The highest praise that mortal saint can give, is the praise that vents itself in the exclamation, "for me to live is Christ." *Resignation under present trouble* also supplies some of the softest, sweetest, and most melodious notes in the anthem of a life song. May God now inspire every heart in his presence with the desire that burned in David. On every lip may the same question dwell, and in the life and character of every one may the answer be heard and seen.—AMEN.

Scripture Read—Psalm CXVI.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—990—214—709.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

IN MEMORIAM.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY-EVENING, NOVEMBER 20TH, 1870, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants."—PHIL. II—25.

DEATH has been exceedingly busy in our ranks of late, and we have been more than usually reminded of the fact that the church on earth is on the march to join the church triumphant in heaven. Emigration of the happiest kind has been taking place in numbers that have arrested our attention. For a long time souls were coming in troops from the far-off country of sin into the border-land on which we dwell, but comparatively few crossed the narrow sea that divides "the heavenly land from ours." For months we sojourned together without any of our family receiving orders "to go over unto the other side." As a church we were constantly receiving fresh troops from heaven, but few obtained their discharge for heaven. Lately it has been the reverse. Whilst we have been still receiving as many fresh recruits as ever, we have also been called to part with many of our beloved "fellow soldiers." It is but a short time since the first-fruits of our ministry—the first soul God ever made us the means of winning in this sanctuary—was called to her home. I refer to our beloved young sister, JANE HODGES. in whom grace glowed so brightly. During the past week I have been called to stand twice at the open grave of those who used to hear our word, and this evening we are gathered together to hear the Lord's voice to us in the death of our honored brother WILLIAM FREDERICK NIMKEY. For the first time in our history as a church an office-bearer has been laid low in death—a standard-bearer removed.

It is not our custom, as most know, to preach funeral sermons for departed members. As an habitual practice we do not agree with it, and in a church as large and as rapidly growing as this, it would soon become a too frequent service, and to make exceptions would be invidious. But this bereavement stands alone and claims some special notice, on the ground of its forming a new experience in our church history. Often have we been able to say that many who once were one with us in fellowship are now before the throne; but never until now had the deacons and elders of this church a representative on high. It is not in fulfilment of any desire of our departed brother that we hold this evening's service—far from it—one of his dying requests was, "never extol me when I'm gone, for I am only a poor sinner saved by

sovereign grace." We will try and obey his request by magnifying—not him—but the grace of God in him. May his God and ours make it a solemn and yet happy time to all our hearts to-night. I can easily suppose that some present are rather surprised at the text we have selected for this occasion, and find it rather difficult to see how it bears upon our subject. I think that in a few introductory words I shall be able to show the reason of it suggesting itself to our mind, and enable you to see that in the death of our brother NIMKEY we have lost *our* Epaphroditus. Paul wrote this letter to the church at Philippi from Rome, and sent it by the hands of Epaphroditus, who had been sent by that church with a present to the apostle. In the letter Paul gives its bearer the highest testimonial. It appears that whilst at Rome Epaphroditus had been taken seriously ill, and that during his illness his chief anxiety arose from the thought of the sorrow his sickness would cause in the little community to which he belonged, for in those early days a strong family feeling pervaded the churches, making the sorrow and trouble of one the grief of all. Longing to return to Philippi to allay anxiety, Paul found it necessary to permit his departure, and sent by him an earnest request that he should be received with all gladness and held in high repute, because for the work of Christ he had been nigh unto death, not regarding his life in his effort to fulfil their wishes. Now between Epaphroditus and our late brother NIMKEY there exists, I think, a striking likeness. Notice first the terms employed by Paul in describing him. He speaks of him first as "My brother." Not implying any relationship of blood, but of grace and spirit, Paul knew that in their union with Christ and regeneration by the Spirit, they were actually brought into the relationship of brethren, and he knew moreover that in his daily intercourse with the messenger of the church, he had found a spirit that could only be described as brotherly. Does not this description apply to our friend? Any doubt as to his union with the Saviour is an impossibility. His being a brother in Jesus was an undoubted fact by all his fellow members. Every child of God could say concerning him "*My brother.*" Our Father, we knew, was his Father. Our Elder Brother, we feel, was his Elder Brother—and our future home is where we know he now dwells. "A brother in Christ" could be said of him by every christian that ever knew him since he made his public confession. But he was something more. There are many whose brotherly relationship to us by grace we dare not doubt, but of whose brotherly character we see but little. They, no doubt, are relations, but they make us feel they are *distant* ones. Not so with the departed. His genial, sympathetic, loving disposition won our hearts' best love, and in losing him from our number we feel that we have sustained no mere official loss, but the bereavement of one whose whole life and spirit made us say of him, "Our brother." The next description is equally true, "Companion in labour." Never did I know him shrink from any work or leave his brethren to toil alone. One with us in affection, he was always one with us in labour, and with us as "companion." He was no mere critic in labour or grumbler in work, but always companion, never jealously desiring to be dictator, or selfishly seeking his own aggrandizement, but willingly taking his share, either large or small, in every department of church enterprise. He was most emphatically a "fellow soldier," but as we purpose to make this name the subject of our discourse, we shall say

now but little on it. Let it suffice that he was never a laggard in the army, and whenever in the heat of battle we had a moment to look round, we always found him breast to breast with us. A truer comrade on the field, or a more steady warrior for the cross it would be hard to discover.

The last description given of Epaphroditus is peculiarly adapted to our brother NIMKEY, "Your messenger." It is supposed by Dr. GILL that in the early church there were some whose special mission was to look after the distressed and sick, and carry them the relief the church could afford. These men were termed messengers, and occupied the same position our newly appointed "church visitors" will. Our departed brother was most certainly *your* messenger—he was never happier than when doing the service of an Epaphroditus. Visiting the sick, the poor and the dying was his *forte*. Always ready to go anywhere and be a messenger of mercy to anybody, he acquired the name of "our travelling bishop." If every person present who has been visited by him were to hold up his hand, the result would be a very forest of palms. He was a willing and welcome messenger to all prisoners at home. But along with the names given to Epaphroditus must be placed his evident character in order to make the illustration complete. He was we learn from the twenty-sixth verse, of a soft hearted disposition. It was no matter of indifference to him whether the members at the church at Philippi were sorrowful or not; "he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick." The grief of the members about his sickness troubled him more than the sickness itself. Epaphroditus was none of your walking icicles, or animated icebergs. He was a man of warm and tender sympathies, who wanted to assuage grief wherever he found it, and would not for the whole world be the cause of it, if he could possibly prevent. We saw the same in *our* Epaphroditus, he was a man of an enlarged heart and almost womanly affections. His was not the character to overawe with its grandeur, but the one to melt by its love, His dying words to me were "Pastor, as far as I know I have never intentionally wounded the spirit of any, and if ever I have done so unwittingly, it has always been a source of deepest sorrow to me." The secret of his being so universally loved was found in the fact that he loved so universally.

Paul also indicates that the messenger from Philippi was a man *devoted* to his work, "for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life." We should be sorry to think or say that any work our brother did, ever helped to bring him nigh to death, or had a hand in his death. But we are prepared to say that for the work of Christ he did not regard his life. Many a time within the last few months did he come here when we all felt it was disregarding his life to do so. To the very last, whilst an atom of strength remained, he was willing and wanting to perform the office of your messenger, and taking a step ahead of Epaphroditus, he has not only come nigh to death, but died in the work, and the sorrow which Paul rejoiced he was spared has now become ours.

One more word about the character and I finish drawing the parallel between the two. Both were worthy of being held in reputation. The world is often grossly mistaken in those it considers worthy of its notice. The wealthy—the unscrupulous—the successful—these are often the ones chosen by the world as the subjects for honourable

mention. Christians know better! and let those you hold in reputation be the men who living have lived for their Saviour, and whose lives have been devoted to the glory of His cross. Hold those most in reputation whose christian eloquence has been the eloquence of christian and self-denying action.

Leaving now all the descriptions of Epaphroditus, and putting him also on one side, we will speak of our "fellow soldier" WILLIAM F. NIMKEY. As a regiment of the Lord's hosts we mourn the gap that death has made in our ranks, and gathering, as it were, around our camp fire, we will call up a few memories of the warrior who is now taking his rest before the throne.

We will speak first of *his enlistment into the army;* then *our remembrances of him as a fellow soldier—his last battle—his present victory* and *the voice of his death to all.*

I. HIS ENLISTMENT INTO THE ARMY. On this point we shall speak very briefly, as we know but little of his earlier life, and our brother was never one to refer much to himself in conversation. This however we do know, and often has he declared it; *he was enlisted by Divine grace.* Like all the rest of God's soldiers, there was a time when he served under the black banner of rebellion. His heart like ours was at enmity against God and his determination was "I will not have Him to rule over me." In God's own time the mighty change was effected, and the rebel became transformed into the devoted servant. This change our brother always most emphatically attributed to the full, free, sovereign grace of God. Nothing roused his spirit so much as any hinting that such change could be accomplished apart from the direct influence of the Holy Ghost in accordance with the eternal decrees of God's gracious purposes. From first to last his enlistment like that of every other heavenly warrior was of God. It was grace that first aroused his soul from the lethargy of indifference, and breaking through the plated armour of his soul's carelessness, made him cry out with earnestness, "What shall I do to be saved?" He always loved to declare that it was the same grace showed him a Saviour that first showed him his need of one, and that it was all owing to free distinguishing grace that he ever cast the weapons of his rebellion at the foot of the cross, and looking up into the face of Him who hung thereon, exclaimed "Hail, Lord Jesus! I acknowledge Thee to be my Lord, and from henceforth it is only under Thy banner I fight and die." He enlisted at Calvary through the constraining power of the Spirit, and through that alone. The loyalty of soul he showed so constantly was God-given.

We cannot say positively *at what age* he joined the army, but from most careful inquiry and comparing one thing with another, we have come to the conclusion that he enlisted in early youth, but that shortly after he became somewhat of a backslider. Never into open sin, or neglect of attendance at God's house, but sufficient to keep him from making any public profession. His light for some years was dim. We mention this because we are most anxious not to overdraw his picture, but give it as faithfully as possible, as we are certain that could he but speak to us himself it would be on this he would dwell the most. I was much struck with one sentence he uttered the last time I ever saw him alive. "I feel," said he, "that my life has been a backsliding one." Let none for one moment imagine that this

season of coldness was after his public profession. Far, very far from it! From the time when his light came out of obscurity (about ten years since) there has been no wavering, no weakness, but it has brightened more and more, until now it has developed into the perfect day.

He was drawn to Christ by *quiet and gradual* means. The same Spirit has a diversity of operations, and perhaps no two sinners are converted in precisely the same manner, and with identical experiences. With some, as with the speaker, not only can the means be remembered, but the year, the month, the day, the hour and the very spot; but with a large number the work is too gradual to be detected, and they can only say with the man of old, "One thing I know whereas I was blind, now I see." It was in this latter way our brother was enlisted. There may perhaps be some few present who remember the time when he came before the church for fellowship, when it worshipped in Grosvenor Street; if so, they will remember that when asked by what means and when he found the Saviour, he replied in the language of scripture, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth," "so has it been in my case." This church was the first one he ever joined, although he had been in the constant habit of frequenting the sanctuary. He was brought up amongst the Wesleyans, and was then for some years a seat holder at Coverdale Chapel, during the ministry of Mr. Seaborne, and afterwards at Salem Chapel, Bow Road. This is all we know of his spiritual life previous to his becoming one with our regiment. We will now speak more fully of what we found him during the years of his church life.

II. OUR RECOLLECTIONS OF HIM AS A FELLOW SOLDIER. We have but to recall to our minds his familiar face and some of his conversations with us to find many a happy memory. The first recollection of him as a fellow soldier that occurs to me is that *he was always one remarkably jealous of his captain's honour.* No one held more tenaciously than our brother those doctrines that more especially glorify the sovereignty and grace of our God; and never could he tolerate any thing that seemed in any measure to give to man the glory due to the captain. So jealous was he about the honour of his Lord, that any word that appeared to suppose man could do any thing of himself, was sure to be noticed by him. Often have I smiled, when, after some evening sermon in which I had been inviting and intreating sinners to come to Christ, he would say to me in his kind and loving way, "I hope, dear pastor, that none of them will think they can come by their own power, for it is not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." No man loved the sinner or the freeness of the gospel more than he, but he was ever anxious, and *rightly* so, that the gospel should be preached in a way that put man in the dust and Christ on the throne. The ruling passion was, in his case, strong in death; and the passages of scripture that afforded him the most joy were those that most abounded with the glory of divine grace. One remark of his is so deeply impressed upon my memory that I think I can give it you in the precise words. Said he, "I have often been thought to have been rather high in doctrine, but I find now that they are the only ones on which a man can die with joy." The covenant of grace, the glorious sufficiency of the atonement, and unutterable affection of God for His people, these were the subjects that chiefly

employed his lips in life and sustained his heart in death. Telling him one Sunday afternoon that I was going to preach in the evening upon complete justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ, he exclaimed, "That is it—preach that, preach that—all of grace and the sinners' salvation all in Christ." Feeling that nothing but grace could ever have suited his case, he was always jealous of its honour.

He was one who had a high sense of a soldier's duty. To be a Christian, in his estimation, was something more than merely assuming the name, and to be a church member, entailed in his opinion a high responsibility. As a Christian soldier he believed in enduring hardness, and the standard he set for himself was a high one. Like Epaphroditus, he belived that in the path of duty life itself should be unregarded. I heard the other day an anecdote of him, illustrative of this high sense of a soldier's duty. Being desirous of visiting a family where there was most infectious disease, many asked him not, and tried their best to dissuade him; his answer was, "I believe a Christian ought to dare to go anywhere on his Master's service, and if *they* keep away, who can you expect to go?" It was this same spirit that brought him into our midst until so near his end. Only a few weeks before he took to his death bed, I ran round to his house one Monday, before the prayer meeting, to have a chat with him, knowing he was exceedingly ill, great was my surprise to find him in the hall, just getting ready to start, gently remonstrating with him, he answered, "I must go so long as I can, and it will not be much longer, let me have the help of your arm and I think I can crawl there." I could not but admire the Christian stuff he was made of, and wishing more were like him in this respect. He was also *noted for his cheerfulness.* It is by this characteristic he will be remembered by many the longest. Gloom seemed a thing unknown to him, and even his long and painful illness was unable to altogether remove the habitually happy expression of his countenance. He was always found sitting on the sunny side of the hedge, and never was he wanting in some happy cheerful word to others; this I willingly grant was in a great measure due to one of naturally the best of tempers, which was the more remarkable considering his calling, for of all things calculated to mar a happy and amiable spirit, I should think the daily teaching a number of boys was the worst. Grace however counteracted every temptation to acidity of temper, and he will long be remembered as the brother who seemed always happy himself, and always trying to make others so.

He was one willing for any kind of work. I had never to fear lest I should wound his dignity or hurt his pride in asking him to do anything. He was happily free from that stupid "standing upon one's dignity" that cramps so many in their work. It was all one to him what he did. He always seemed to me a living commentary on our morning's text, "Here am I, send me." Was a brother wanted to show friends into the pews, he was always ready, and used to say laughingly, "I believe I am just the one for the work, for I can never remember whose the pews are, so after the hour, I always fill straight up, and there is no fear of my showing any favoritism." Was there some sick one wanted visiting, who lived in an out of the way quarter, he was all ready to go, no matter where; and who was it you always found standing at the door, no matter how cold the wind, to take your tickets at our tea meetings? Why, our brother NIMKEY! Any service

for the church, however humble, was to him always welcome. And lastly on this point I would add, he was a brother *unusually beloved in the regiment and out of it too.* I need say nothing of your love to him as a church. Last Monday gave sufficient testimony of that, when close on seven hundred of you followed him to the grave, but this I may add, that ever since I have been pastor here, now close on four years, I have never heard one word breathed against him, but countless expressions of affection towards him. As in our regiment, so out of it. I will just read you a line or two from a letter I have here with me, that will express the feelings of many who are united with other churches. The brother says "I regret I cannot be with you" (that is to this service) "all the more as I have always felt a most sincere regard for our friend, and his warm hearty shake of the hand and kind words to me, a comparative stranger and member of another church, have often made me feel when worshipping at Stepney, no more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home. Would that God might raise up more like him in our churches." In one word, our recollections of him as a fellow soldier are *most happy.*

III. His Last Battle. There is always something deeply interesting in that which is known to be "the last." How are the final words and the final visit, and the last look of a loved one treasured up in the memories of friends. The words may have been commonplace, the visit an ordinary one, the look a frequent one, but they all obtain a charm from the thought—they will be heard no more, received no more and seen no more. Many a battle did our brother wage with foes within and foes without, but to us his final battle with the last enemy will always have an additional interest. I will remark first that it was a *protracted one?* From the commencement of this year it may be said the woodman Death had marked the tree for falling, and for many months our brother knew no earthly power could save him. In the month of April he was suddenly afflicted with congestion of the lungs, which laid him low for many weeks, beside which he had a dangerous internal disease which of itself was sufficient to make death merely a question of time. Being advised by several medical men to try a change of air, it was arranged for him to go in the month of June to Hastings. I had promised to go down with him on the Monday, but on the previous Sabbath morning he suddenly ruptured a blood vessel; when sufficiently recovered to be able to speak, he turned to his wife and said, "Mother, this is my passport to Heaven." Seeing him on the Monday morning I could hardly refrain from weeping on observing in the room the carpet bags already packed for our intended journey. Reading my thoughts he quietly remarked, "Man proposes, but God disposes. "*It is Heaven, not Hastings, it is Heaven, not Hastings* I am going to." From this time he rapidly declined, and after keeping his bed for seven weeks, with a patience and joyfulness unaffected by the great pain he was in, he breathed his last on Monday week, with the name of Jesus on his lip. It was a battle *victorious all along the line.* Through Him that loved him, he was made more than conqueror at every point of attack. His faith remained unstaggered, his joyful confidence was never put to the rout, and his hope but brightened as his end drew near; one remark of his I consider very beautiful, and as it gives testimony to the completeness of his victory I will repeat it. Shortly before he passed away, I said to him, "well, brother Nimkey

and how are you *now?* Thinking I made reference to his body, he replied, "Very low, very low indeed." "But how about the soul, brother?" Lifting his hand slowly up and with a countenance that brightened as he spoke, he said "*that still soars, that still soars.*" May our last battle be as glorious as that of our fellow soldier.

IV. His Present Victory. I shall not detain you two minutes on this point, for did I try to describe it, I should only find it surpasses all power of language. Let it suffice us to know that it is *complete* and *eternal.* He has done with sickness, pain, sorrow, sin, the curse, and done with them completely. He has entered into joy, peace, holy service, and his Saviour's presence, and entered into them for ever. O could our eyes but see him now, our grief for his loss would be swallowed up in joy about his gain. He rests with his Jesus and rejoices with his God.

V. The voice of this bereavement to us. It has a lesson for us all. It speaks to those of us who *hold office* in this church, and says "Be diligent, soon must you follow in the footsteps of your departed companion in labour. Let not your office be a sinecure, but like Epaphroditus, let the work of your master be regarded even more than life." It speaks *to the Church*, and says "Be ye also ready. Death is no respecter of persons. The cedar has fallen, shall the fir tree be spared?" As one after another of our workers depart to their rest, determine but to do and dare more whilst life is spared. As one soldier after another fights his last battle, close up your ranks, and with redoubled energy press the fight." *Sinner* it speaks to you, and, O would to God you might hear its warning. Die *you* must, whether prepared or not. Flee from death fast as you may, it will overtake you. The grim hunter holds by the leash a troop of hounds baying for thy blood. Their names are fever, palsy, old age and consumption. They are all fleeter of foot than you. The black camel, as the Arabs picture death, will soon kneel at your door, mount you must, and ride where? Do you laugh at death? Then you are a madman. Laugh when the hurricane is pulling down about your ears your frail tabernacle? It is frenzy, it is worse. Die you must, but what kind of a death remains to be seen. There are only two, choose which you will have. I see a dying saint upon his bed, there is joy in his heart and a light in his eye; as his body sinks lower his soul mounts aloft, and at last with outstretched hands and the cry "Lord help me now," he falls asleep in Jesus. So died our brother Nimkey. The scene changes—I see one dying fast, the death-damp stands upon his brow, and the death chill freezes the very marrow of his bones. It is dark within—it is dark without—*it is dark ahead.* The last breath struggles through his lips, and the spirit leeps into eternity *unsaved.* Friend, that death is yours unless you fly to Christ. O hasten to Jesus now, and say in the words of the hymn last quoted by our brother—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

Scripture Read—I Cor. XV, from 31st verse.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—100, part I—828—843.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHY GO TO HELL?

A Sermon

DELIVERED LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 18th, 1870, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Why will ye die?"—EZEKIEL xxxiii—2.

DOUBTLESS those of you who were with us last Sabbath evening have not yet forgotten the subject of discourse.* It was a solemn time to us all. God was in our midst, and we felt that we had received a warning from Him to prepare for death. "This year thou shalt die" sounded in our ears, and not knowing who the one would be many of us took the message as if specially addressed to ourselves. Looking death in the face, and contemplating the tremendous results depending on it, we realized something of the experience of one of old when he exclaimed "how dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God." Many of you will also remember that I said while preaching that it was deeply laid upon my heart that some of my hearers would be in eternity before the year was out. This statement proved to be only too true. Oh, how much greater would have been the solemnity of the service had you all but known what I learnt only three minutes after the sermon was concluded. Whilst I was preaching there was one lying a corpse who was in this Tabernacle on the previous Sabbath evening. He heard with many of you that sermon on the text, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," and alas on the following Tuesday he was cut down with little warning. Impressed I know he was, but whether more than that I cannot say. What a voice has this to us! it says to me, "preach as a dying man to dying men; waste no time over mere prettinesses of speech, but plead with men as for eternity." O God, I pray thee, save me from trifling with immortal spirits, and speaking as if I only half believe the warnings that I utter or the gospel that I proclaim. But my hearers, it speaks to you. Before this year has gone, few though its remaining days are, some of you may be swept away as with a flood. Time with you may be over—eternity commenced. Is it so? How then ought you to listen—with what breathless interest ought you to attend when we tell of the only way whereby you may be saved. Will you sit listless and careless as if the subject concerned you not, when we plead with you about matters which will decide your eternal weal or woe. Awake! awake!! ye drowsy ones, for I have that to tell you this night which will be remembered by you either in heaven or hell. My subject is a more stupendous one than last Sunday night's. Then I spoke only of the death of the body, but now I am going to speak about the death

* Jeremiah xxviii—16.

of the soul. Listen to me you *shall*. God has brought you this evening under the sound of the word, and there is something within me that tells me that God will this night give me a message to some of you. I doubt not some will be offended, for I shall speak some plain truths in rather rough language; I care not if there are, for I must have souls at any price. An overwhelming desire is within me to clear myself of the blood of all, and if I have never warned or pleaded with you before, I will *now*, God helping me. This year has almost gone; but one Sabbath now remains, and that, being Christmas day, many of you will not be here. To numbers then this is the last sermon I shall preach this year, to some perhaps the last for ever. I am going to ask you a startling question to-night, one very different from my usual kind. Hundreds of times have I asked you 'why will ye not be saved,' but now I ask you, "why *will* ye be damned?" It is not this evening "why will ye not go to heaven?" but why *will* ye go to hell? I want a reason for your infatuation. I want a cause for your preference for perdition. But stay, I am in error; it is not I, but God, who asks the question. It is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who says, "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for WHY will ye die?" Looking now to the Lord for power and earnestness, I will try and dwell upon three things in the text. First, you have in it *a horrible resolution implied*—to die. Secondly, *a plaintive question asked*—why? Thirdly, *a glorious truth taught*—God does not desire thy ruin.

I. First then, WE HAVE A HORRIBLE RESOLUTION. It is a resolution to die—a determination to be damned. "Stay, sir," says one, "that is far too strong an assertion; who ever heard any one say that he intended to go to hell?" I never said any one had been *heard* to say so, all I say is, they determine to. There are two ways of speaking, one by the lip and the other by the actions, and I am inclined to think the latter way is often the most truthful; at all events the old saying declares that "actions speak louder than words." I have never heard a sinner say he had made up his mind to be eternally lost, but I have often seen him say it, and seeing is believing. There are several ways of expressing a resolution to die without uttering a word. I will mention three of them, and leave it with you to determine whether I am justified or not in saying sinners mean to go to hell.

A man may be said to have resolved to die *when he uses the means of death*. After knowing that a certain course of action will be sure to end in death, then if he still persist in it, it is a mere quibble to say that he never intended to die, because he never told anybody so with his lips. He *did* tell them so in the most emphatic manner he could. As I want to bring the solemnity of the subject home to every heart, I shall employ some illustrations perhaps more forcible than elegant. Elegant did I say! Elegancies are out of place when immortal souls are in the balance. Come then and let me show you a picture. Do you see that man in yonder room? He carefully locks and double locks the door—he casts his eye round to make sure no one is concealed—with determined step he advances to the cupboard, and, mounting a chair, takes from the top shelf a small bottle. He puts it to his lips

and drinks a few drops. What is it? Why look! don't you see that red label on it, with the words 'SLOW POISON?' That is what it is! He drinks again—a cold chill seems to grip his heart, and from head to foot he shudders. Again he puts the deadly mixture to his lips, and now, whilst his heart feels like ice, his brain begins to burn. It feels to him as if the fiery chariot of Elijah was coursing through his veins. He drinks again. His hands become palsied—his throat parched—all swims around him, and :—but we will follow the wretched suicide no further, nor attempt to describe the last few moments of his poisoned life. What I want you to answer is this, "did not that man's actions declare without a word on his part that he meant to die?" Of course they did, the mixture was labelled poison, he read it so, knew it was so, and yet he took it. Do you say "he was mad;" granted perhaps he was, but that alters not the argument—in his madness he resolved to die, Let me now present to you the horrible reality of which this is but an illustration. There is a black mixture, sweet to the natural taste of man, but labelled by God "slow poison" called sin. The result of taking it is declared in language that cannot be mistaken, to be certain death. The soul that sinneth it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." These are a few of the red labels of caution that God has put upon sin. Now if the sinner, in spite of all warning, not only refuses the antidote for the poison he has already imbibed, but loves the death-dealing draught, and revels in his secret drams, what conclusion can he come to than that he means to die the death. O, young man, would that I could speak a word to-night to arrest thee in thy miserable infatuation. Your secret sins like stolen waters you now find to be sweet. An impulse well nigh irresistable draws you again and again to the fatal drink. For heaven and hell's sake stop! It is poison that you are drinking. But alas! you, with sinners of all kinds present, know it. Sin has been marked as "poison" a thousand times before your eyes, and yet you roll it as a sweet morsel under your tongue. *Surely you must have determined to be damned.* It has sent the deadly chill to your heart, its poison is working in your mind and memory to-night, and yet you grasp the cup, and with hell-inspired resolution murmur, "I will have more." You are a suicide, man, and that of the worst kind, for you are killing your soul. God's verdict over you, when the slow poison has done its work, will be "thou hast destroyed thyself."

But again, the man may be said to have determined to die, *who spurns all that could save him from death.* On this point I think I shall be able to touch some of you home, who have warded off the former blow. Say you, "Ah, that slow poison illustration does not affect me much, I am no open sinner who revels in his sin, I am not rushing to eternity without a thought, I am most particular about my morality, and I pay much respect to religious affairs." Stop a minute, friend! Not quite so fast, please. You are just as determined upon soul-suicide as the poor madman we have described. Remember it is possible to ensure death by simply refusing to accept anything that could rescue from it. Granted, for the sake of argument, that you are not one delighting in open sin and drinking down its poison with

delight, yet you *have* sinned. The poison is in your blood, working death, and in *rejecting Christ* you have given as awful a proof of determination to die as ever you could have given by the vilest of lives. Let me hold a mirror before you, that you may see yourself. On that bedstead there lies a man dying to all appearance as fast as possible. The death dew stands upon his brow, and for every breath he has a struggle. The poison has well-nigh done its work. But lo! a physician enters hot with speed, he has heard of the case, and come with overwhelming earnestness to tell the man he has an antidote that can save even to the uttermost. He assures him he was poisoned himself by the same thing, tried the antidote, and was saved by it. He offers it—presses it upon the man. Taking the medicine in his hand, and without saying a solitary word, the dying wretch summons all the strength he has, and hurls it through the window. What does that action say? Why, "*I mean to die.*" Ah! moralist, remember that with all your morality you are rejecting Christ, the heavenly antidote; and that says, without your uttering a word, "I mean to be damned."

Lastly on this point.—a man may be said to have determined to die *who surmounts all obstacles placed in his way in order to prevent him.* I see a man making his way with dreadful haste to the canal. I know he means death. I rush in front of him and hold out my arms across the path. With an oath he dodges under them and pursues his headlong race. I call to another man to stop him, but with a blow the maniac fells him. There is one last chance. Across the foot-path along which he runs there is an open gate. I call to one at hand, and he swings it close. "Thank God" I exclaim, "he is saved now." Not so, with one leap he clears it, and nothing now remains to thwart his purpose. What purpose? Why death of course. Has he not fought his way to it? Sinner, I mean you. God only knows how many obstacles you have overcome in your race to ruin. In early days a mother stopped your path, but you soon evaded her, and broke her heart. You can now jest about the foolish fears of the "old woman," as you term her. A Sunday school teacher did his best to arrest you, but he proved no great obstacle, you soon left his class when you found he was satisfied with nothing less than the salvation of your soul. Hundreds of sermons have been flung across your path, but you have somehow got over them all. I am trying to shut a gate before you this evening, but I have little doubt you will soon surmount it and laugh round your supper table to-night, at the folly of the preacher who tried to stop *you.* Well, I can but mourn if it be so, and tell my Lord, "Lord, I did my best to be the means of saving him, but it was of no avail, *he has made up his mind to be lost.*" We must now to our second point.

II. The Text asks a Plaintive Question. Why will ye die? Why this determination to be ruined for ever? Surely, friend, you must have some weighty reason for a resolution so fraught with eternal importance. What can it possibly be? I fear it must be one founded on a delusion, so I will ask you two or three questions which I pray God may be the means of shaking you out of your infatuation. *Is hell so pleasant a place you want to enter there?* Is there anything

in the descriptions given of it in scripture that can possibly become father to the desire of going there. Unless I am under one of the strangest delusions, I think I have read of such things as a fire that never is quenched—of a worm that never dies—of a smoke of torment that ever ascends—of outer darkness, and weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Unless my Bible is a different one to yours, I think I have read that Christ said—and surely He ought to know—that it would be better for a man never to have been born than ever enter there. Was it not the psalmist who said that horror seized him at the thought of the sinner's doom? The hell described in my Bible is a very awful one, and I think you will find the same in yours. O sinner, to be damned is no trifle! The hell of scripture makes your resolution the resolution of a maniac. "*Why* will ye die?" But if it be not that hell is desirable, is it *because heaven has no charms?* Are the descriptions of heaven such that they present no attraction to you? Is heaven a dreary, joyless place, not worth a thought? If you think so, certainly your Bible cannot be the same as mine. Surely I have read of it as a place where there is no pain, no sickness, no sorrow, no tears, no death. I cannot be mistaken on that point. Have I not read of golden streets and gates of pearl, of harps and crowns, and singing loud as the sound of many waters? Surely I have. O friend, the heaven described in your Bible and mine is worth suffering a martyrdom to obtain. Then if it be so, why go to hell? If perdition's attractiveness and heaven's want of attraction be not the reasons for your resolution, what are?

Is eternity in your estimation a trifle? Do you count it a mere addenda to life, a thing only to be thought of when there is nothing else to occupy the mind—a mere postscript to life's letter? Is eternity a matter of so little importance that it concerns you not whether you are lost or saved? How sad the thought, that the vast mass of mankind lives as if the few years on earth was the chief portion of its existence, and the ages beyond of secondary importance. Let me try and arrest your attention by the thought of the boundlessness of your future life. I could better understand your indifference to salvation, or, as we are describing it to-night—your preference for perdition—if the future state was in either case of only limited duration. But to risk the loss of a soul, when *for ever and for ever* is part of the contract, is almost sufficient to stagger belief, were there not so many sad witnesses to the fact.

Think, friend, that with the close of this life closes all hope of any future alteration. As death leaves you, the judgment will find you, and as the judgment leaves you, eternity will keep you. O, eternity, eternity, what art thou? What mind can grasp thy immensity—what tongue describe thee rightly? O, eternity thou "life-time of God," make thy unknown ages eloquent with souls now. Tell them, that if they are damned, it is without hope of rescue for ever. Ask them, if in their resolution to die, they have reckoned thee in the costs. How shall I give you any idea of what eternity is—how convey to your minds any true conception of the meaning of the words "for ever." I can but employ the finite to illustrate the infinite—the limitable to describe illimitable. It was but the other day you watched the snow-

flakes as they fell in numbers that dazzled the eyes. Millions a minute seemed to whirl in eddies around you. They covered the ground—festooned the trees—though tiny in themselves, they mantled, by their countless multitudes, the earth for miles round. Who shall say how many flakes were required to make that winding sheet? Now suppose that only *one* flake melted in a *thousand years*, how long would it be before every vestige of the snow storm had passed away? The mind reels at such a course of time. We are almost tempted to exclaim "the time could never come, when for miles round there would be but one flake left, and then a thousand years must pass before that last had vanished, the time is inconceivable." Yet the time would come when the last flake had gone. Now after a thousand such snowstorms had fallen and past away, eternity would have only just commenced. No period of time, however vast, can bring the end one iota nearer. *Eternity has no end.* Sinner, have you thought of all this, or has the ocean of eternity without a bottom or a shore been thought a trifle beside the drop of the bucket you call life? Stop!! and with the waters of this ocean at thy feet, listen to God's question. "*why* will ye die?"

I have one more question to ask, and then I shall have exhausted all possible reasons I can think of for your determination. *Do you consider a soul worthless?* Amongst your possessions does that rank for naught? If so, I can understand your willingness to have it lost, for men fret not over the loss of that they value not. You value your health, you value your home, you value your friends, but you set no value on your soul. Is it so? Then let us see if there be not a lamentable error in judgment. Surely that which will outlive all the other possessions of a man must be of *some* worth. When health has gone and death come, your soul will still survive. When your home has gone to ruins, and the world to ashes, the soul you set so little count on will still survive, nothing can destroy it, nothing even age it, it is eternal as our God Himself. Remember also that if you count it of but little value, it has been differently estimated by one who ought to know, considering that he made it. Have you never read anything like this before, "what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Christ considers that the worth of one soul outweighs the accumulated wealth of a universe. Would that you thought so too, but alas, in answer to the question "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" you reply "give me a little pleasure, give me a little noisy mirth, give me something of this world, and the devil may take my soul." Friend, believe me it is an awful bargain you are making, and one you will repent for ever when it is too late. Your soul is priceless in its value, worth—so thought Jesus—a bloody sweat in Gethsemane, and a cruel death at Calvary. Then if these things be so, tell me, tell me now, "*why* will ye die?"

Thus far this evening's subject has been far more solemn than joyful. I have been obliged to dwell upon the dark side of the picture in order to clear my soul of responsibility. As watchman, I have seen the enemy coming, and I have endeavoured to blow a blast of warning, so that if any of you be cut down by him your blood may be upon your own head and not mine. Let us turn now to the joyous part of our subject.

III. THE TEXT TEACHES A GLORIOUS TRUTH, FULL OF HOPE FOR SINNERS. If this text proclaims anything, it declares with trumpet-tongue that hell is not unavoidable. It steps in the path of the sinner, throws a barrier before him, and argues with him to wean him from his fatal resolve. "Sinner," it seems to say, "why will ye die, why will ye go to hell when ye need not unless ye will, why make perdition unavoidable when God has not?" O friends, what a joyful message is this I have to tell! How ought I not to tell it out to you! But alas, what mortal tongue can utter words worthy of the theme; they ought to be words melting with tenderness, ringing with joy, flashing with earnestness. An escape possible from hell!! Why, such a message is enough to make a sick man forget his pain, and preach with joy—enough almost to bring the dying from his bed and touch his lips again with power and fire. Hell unavoidable! It were worth an angel's while to fly from heaven to earth's remotest nook to tell the news. Think for a moment what it means. It means that hell may be for ever and for ever an unknown place to you. It means that you *need* never know what the unquenchable fire feels like, or hear the weeping and the wailing of those who gnash their teeth in agony. It means that it is possible for you to escape all the horror and despair summed up in that one word "damned." These thoughts burn within me like a fire—the immensity and the eternity of the interests involved, well-nigh overwhelm me, and I find it true, that often when the heart is fullest the lips can say the least. I feel as if I could but stand before this throng, and sob "Sinner, *you need not, you need not* be lost, hell can yet be escaped." Yea, I fain would come in your midst, and taking hold of the hand of him who is resolved to die, say, "dear friend, will you be damned *when there is no occasion for it?*" Away with the blasphemous thought that there are sinners irrevocably doomed for perdition, who must go to ruin by decree. The only necessity rests with themselves. There are none present shut up in the steel prison house of doom to be led forth against their cries and prayers to execution. If a man be saved, it is God's work from first to last, but if he be finally lost, his blood shall rest upon his own head; from the commencement to the close, his damnation has been his own. But how friends, ought you to receive such a message? Surely if I ought to deliver it with earnestness, you ought to listen to it as for your life. Oh what a hateful thing is sin, that makes man hear his own doom and his possible mercy with equal indifference. It would not be so if the life concerned was his natural one on earth. In yonder cell there sits a man who has been tried and condemned by his country's laws. The day of execution draws near, and a shivering despair settles down upon the miserable wretch. I am allowed to be a messenger of hope and mercy to him. The bolt grates in the socket, and the lock springs back with a snap, and I stand before him. Placing my hand upon his shoulder I whisper in his ear, "I am come to tell you death may yet be averted and your life spared." See the start he gives, mark the imploring look in his eye, as starting to his feet he cries with a cry that makes the stone walls ring, "is it true, may I yet be saved?" There is no indifference on his part as I tell him it is yet possible for him to leave the dungeon, escape death, and

enjoy life. Sinner, you are the man, and looking in your face I tell you to-night "hell may be escaped—perdition avoided and heaven entered." O cry out "how?" I answer, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

A word or two only on the next glorious truth taught in the text, a truth which I have already rather anticipated; *God does not desire the sinner's ruin.* It is no pleasure to God to deliver over the sinner to his just doom. He takes no delight in hell. The infinitely-happy God finds not one of the sources of his happiness in the perdition of His creatures. Punish them eternally He will if they die in their sin, His truth requires it; but in that punishment he finds no joy. The bottomless pit was never digged to gratify revenge, nor the eternal fires kindled in order to give vent to blinded fury. *Hell was never prepared for man at all,* but for the devil and his angels, and it is only if man prefers Satan to God on earth, that he must reap the consequence of his choice in eternity by dwelling for ever in the home of the one he has preferred. God sent not His Son into the world to condemn it, nor His Spirit into it to seal men for destruction. It is they who rejecting the Son and resisting the Spirit make their own destruction certain. God has declared by an oath that He takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner. "*As I live,* saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Not only does God repudiate the idea of His finding pleasure in the death of the sinner, but he also declares He finds pleasure in their salvation, "but that the wicked turn from His way and live." That He does so is soon proved. Let Gethsemane bear its witness—let Calvary add its deep "Amen." The bloody sweat, the bloodier scourging, and the dreadful death of Jesus, all affirm in tones it is impossible not to understand, that *although God hates sin He loves the sinner,* with a love unutterable. How shall I now conclude? What can I say to arrest you in your course, and save you from its consequences? I will cry out, in the language of the text, "TURN YE, TURN YE." I see to night a multitude of immortal spirits rushing with the speed of time to doom, of which they have no conception. I behold a number of infatuated souls choosing death rather than life. O, turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?

Stop sinner. For your soul's sake—for heaven's sake—for hell's sake—stop. For eternity's sake, stop and turn. Do you cry, "where?" Why yonder, to the Rock of Ages. Hide yourself in the cleft of the rock—shelter in the wounds of Jesus. Stay not one moment, but escape for thy life. TURN YE, TURN YE, WHY WILL YE DIE?

Scripture read—Proverbs VIII.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book"—551—501—522.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SERMON TO DEBTORS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 15TH, 1871, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors." ROMANS viii—12.

No sin is more hateful to God or hideous in man than pride. It is against this sin that some of the strongest invectives of scripture are hurled, and the saint of God, although finding it still lurking within himself, knows no language too severe to employ in its condemnation. "Every one proud in heart is," I read, "an abomination to the Lord." And it is against the man of pride God places himself in battle array, for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." Pride is a daring sin that disputes the very sovereignty of Jehovah, and ventures to rob Him of the glory which is His due. It hardens the sinner in his sin, and ensures his doom by making him spurn the salvation that saves in the dust; it dries up and withers the strength of the saint, and places an insurmountable barrier in the way of his usefulness for his God. It is the pioneer of disaster and destruction, and heralds the way to misery and ruin. The direst judgments of God recorded in the word are those that came on pride. Other sins have slain their thousands, but this its tens of thousands. What solitary word can be said in its excuse? I know that all sin is without excuse, and that it is not for us to attempt the palliation of any, yet, at the same time, there are degrees in guilt. Some sins lead more to pity and sorrow than anything else, but pity is wasted when bestowed on pride. Rightly viewed, it can only produce burning indignation and deep loathing. It is a sin that can plead no possible cause for existence. It is founded on a lie and supported by ignorance. Pride!!—it is a sin without foundation, for what has man to be proud about? The natural man being nothing but a mass of guilt and unforgiven crime, has only cause for shame, and the saint being only what he is by the grace of God, is equally destitute of ground for boasting. Pride is the first-born child of its mother ignorance; it can only thrive in darkness, and expires in the light. Have you not observed in daily life that the most ignorant and untaught—the men whose minds are most cramped—the men who can only be described as "little," are always the men most crammed full of conceit. They know so little that they know not the smallness of their knowledge, and consequently pride themselves on knowing everything. Let but

a little light stream into their minds, and the first thing they perceive is that they know next to nothing. So is it spiritually. A soul unenlightened from on high remains content with itself, and from its dusty darkness pride is bred. Ignorant as a post it talks proud nonsense like the pharisee, and thanks God it is *not* like the man whom He justifies. But anon the spirit shines into the man. The dark chambers of his heart are lit up, the unrevealed filth is manifested, and in a moment the building in which he has so gloried tumbles down about his ears. Confounded by the sudden revelations made, his pride collapses, and taking the position of the publican he once despised, he borrows his prayer and cries "God be merciful to me a sinner." But alas! pride has many lives, and dies hard. Although in the hour of conversion it receives a death-blow it yet is far from dead, and its dying struggles are all too strong for native strength; it lingers with the saint a lifetime and only dies when he himself is dead. Shall we excuse the sin because it lingers with us to the last? God forbid. Of all pride, saint pride is the very worst; it is unaccountable—ungenerous—hateful, and if this evening's service does nothing else than cut its plumes and cast it to the ground, we shall not have gathered here in vain.

"Brethren, we are debtors." This assertion is well calculated to bring us to our senses and stop our mouth from boasting. The verse is a keen and glittering axe. May the spirit now place His hand on ours and direct the blow at the very root of the sin. I purpose dividing the subject into three parts, as follows:—First, I shall ask you to have *a look at the debtor himself* in order that we may find out who he is. Secondly, *I shall try and go through his accounts* in order to see how he stands; and Lastly, *I shall try and give a little advice as to what he had better do.*

I. LET US HAVE A LOOK AT THE DEBTOR HIMSELF.

Who is the debtor, and what is his name? These are the questions that naturally arise and we will try and briefly answer them. I notice first that there are many of them. The text is in the plural; "we" are debtors. A long line of them appears, innumerable for multitude. Looking along them the features of the apostle Paul arrest the attention, and I now find that it is he who says to his companions the words that this evening fall upon our ears, "Brethren, we are debtors." Surely there is something strange here, at first glance almost irreconcilable with previous words that have fallen from his lips. Paul a debtor? Why, I thought he was the one who spoke of being Christ's free man, and not under the law but grace. Paul a debtor? Was it not he who said "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us"? Has Paul become legal in his doctrines? After speaking so plainly to the Galatians about their becoming entangled with the works of the law, has he himself fallen into the same error? Was it not Paul who loved to declare in glowing language that Christ had fulfilled the law, paid all its requirements, and completely exonerated all His people from every liability? Surely it was. And yet here we have him declaring himself to be a debtor, and not only himself, but a great company with him. Who are those he links with himself? Are they a number of unconverted sinners,

and as such is he simply speaking on their behalf? No, far from it. The mystery is not to be explained in that way. Those to whom he is writing are those who are "in Christ," and concerning such he declares most emphatically in the first verse of this chapter, that "there is no condemnation." This seems a strange contradiction, "no condemnation," and yet debtors. Acquitted from all charges made against them, and yet debtors. All debts paid in full, and yet debtors still. This demands investigation and careful study, for evidently the debtors mentioned here are *debtor saints, not debtor sinners.* God's children are God's debtors, but in a very different sense to what they were before. It is no longer a burden that crushes them in the dust, heavy with condemnation, but a sweet obligation from which they do not wish their freedom.

The debtors Paul speaks of, and amongst whom he places himself, had been debtors of a different kind in previous days. They had all known what it was to pass wearisome years in the great debtor's prison, within whose walls all mankind are by nature born. They had owed an infinite debt to the justice of God, and the demands of His broken law. Paid it themselves they never could have done. Had they been delivered over unto the tormentors until the uttermost farthing was returned, they would have been in the hands of avenging justice now with their debt not even diminished, far less removed. The creditor required that, they had lost all power to pay. But mercy intervened between the debtors and their doom. Christ took upon Himself their liabilities—became their surety, and consented to be held responsible for them. What tongue can describe the reckoning that he made? No gold or silver paid *that* debt, but BLOOD. Staggering under its crushing weight he fell upon His face in Gethsemane, whilst from His body every pore dropped blood. He carried the load to Calvary's cross, and there in unknown agonies paid the debtors' debts in full; yea, though the load did break His heart, He died not until heaven and earth had heard Him cry "It is finished." Down into the grave He carried His people's debts, and then rising on the third day, left them there for ever. The surety being acquitted, all for whom He stood, must now go free. No debtors' prison can hold them now. They can look into the face of infinite justice itself, and say "I owe thee nought, thou hast received my debt in full from Jesus' hands.

How then can these persons be said to be in debt? This is the question that yet remains to be answered. It is easily done, for every christian's heart supplies the answer. It is the debt of obligation —gratitude and love we owe to Him, by whom we are what we are. Not having paid our own debts, we are indebted to Him who paid them for us. We no longer owe anything to a broken law, but we owe all to a loving Saviour. Blessed debt, that requires no payment but love. Just in a word or two let me, by an illustration, make more clear the indebtedness I mean. There is a poor wretched forlorn creature, who has lost his all. One thing after another has gone, until now he is penniless, besides which he owes more than he will ever be able to repay. What few sticks of furniture he once possessed are now no longer his—the broker is in his room, and he is just about to be

cast upon the street with weeping wife and starving child. In the moment of his supreme agony there enters one whom he has always treated ill and hated. Without one word of reproach he pays the rent, and tells the broker he may leave—he calls in every account the man has ever owed, and pays them all. He provides best food, beautiful garments, and a lovely home, and besides clearing off all past debts makes ample provision for every future want. Now that man is out of debt, is he not? Go and ask him, and he will tell you, weeping tears of joy, "Yes, I am, and no, I am not, for if I owe my former creditors nothing, I owe my all to HIM." Brethren, in this sense we are debtors.

II. LET US NOW GO THROUGH THE DEBTOR'S ACCOUNTS. Up to the present we have only spoken of the saint being a debtor in general terms, but as doubtless there are some present who, although acknowledging themselves debtors, yet remain in a certain measure ignorant of the amount to which they are indebted, I purpose going more into detail. I mean, God helping me, to turn accountant and inspect your books, asking you to follow me carefully and mark the result. There are several books of yours I shall want you to fetch down, and we will together add up the columns of "received" and "paid," and then try and strike the balance. Unless greatly mistaken I think we shall find that in every item we have received far more than we have paid for, and that in the sum total we are tremendous debtors.

Let us first inspect the *spiritual* account book. I can see at a glance that in the left-hand column of "Received" there is a long list of benefits, and that the right-hand column of "Paid" presents a very barren appearance. Let us, however come more closely to the work and take line by line, for general appearances will never do in making up accounts. Standing at the head of the list I read, "*Received mercy.*" Yes, blessed be God, many of us present can speak of mercy, not as that concerning which we entertain a faint hope of some day possessing, but as that which we now *have* to the joy and rejoicing of our hearts. There was a time when mercy was our one desire and daily cry. To obtain that we felt we would sacrifice all besides, and the want of it spread a gloom over our life that nothing could enlighten. Hundreds of times did we go as near the mercy seat as we dared, and that was "afar off," and with downcast eyes that streamed with tears, we smote upon our breast and cried, "O God be merciful to me." Well, thank God, those days are now over. There came a time when as we were weeping and praying, mercy flew to us and said, "Thy prayers are heard; thou hast obtained the desire of thy heart. I am thine." O, with what joyful haste did we record the fact, how our tears—but not tears of grief—stained the page as we wrote, "I have obtained mercy." No longer did we half despairingly cry for it, but in a song that vied in joy with those of the heavenly hosts we sang, "God *has* been merciful to me." Many days have passed since then, but the memories of that moment linger with us still, undiminished in their sweetness. Surely of all we have received from God, mercy is not the least. In the book of Hosea, the second chapter and the first verse, there is a most precious salutation that was to be given by one godly Israelite to another. It is as follows. "Say ye unto your brethren,

Ammi, and to your sisters, Ruhamah." This translated means say unto your brethren "My people," and to your sisters, "Having obtained mercy. What a sweet salutation this, and sweeter still to think that it can be addressed to some hundreds present. My brother, in spirit I grasp you by the hand and cry, Ruhamah! Ruhamah! we have obtained mercy. My sister, our joy is yours also, to many of you I say, Ruhamah! Ruhamah! for you too have obtained mercy. Truly this is a glorious item heading the list. Let us look at the corresponding line in the other column, and see what we paid for so great a blessing. I look in vain for anything, but stay, there is a memorandum there; let us read it. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." What, was mercy received for nothing? Yes, mercy to be mercy must be perfectly free. It came to us unsought, most undeserved, unasked, Unasked! did we not pray for it? Yes, but it was mercy that made us pray for mercy. Sweet mercy, how free art thou! free as the sunbeams that enter the hut and the palace alike! free as the raindrops that fell this afternoon. Brethren, we are debtors, fer we have obtained mercy and paid nothing for it.

Another most important item now appears upon the list of receipts. It reads, "*Received a perfect righteousness.*" Something more than pardon for transgression past is needed for the soul to enter heaven. There must be possessed a righteousness without a flaw—a righteousness not comparative in its merits but superlative. It must be a righteousness that will satisfy God himself—a righteousness that could not possibly be increased—one that will defy the brightness of the great white throne to detect an imperfection. Where is fallen man to obtain such? How can he, who has broken every commandment of the law, yet appear as one who has honored it in every particular, and given to it a never-failing obedience? The answer to this question could never come from man, for how can a clean thing come out of an unclean. When the leopard changes his spots, then may man hope to make himself aught else than a sinner. But thank God, the answer has come, not from us, but our Saviour. He, who was our sin bearer, becomes also our righteousness. Whilst by His blood and death He made an atonement for our guilt, and cleanses us from all our sins, He, by His perfect obedience to the law, worked out a righteousness, which He imputes to all, the moment they by grace believe. O, blessed fact beloved, we are as righteous in the sight of God as Jesus Christ Himself. It is on His righteousness our God looks when He bends His eye on us. This righteousness can never be impaired, can never be removed. It will abide the test of death, and only shine more brightly when the light of the judgment day arises.

What, dear friends, did we give for this justifying robe? I find in the other column no mentioned price, but simply a text recorded, "and this is His name, whereby he shall be called 'Jehovah—tsidkenu'"—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Brethren, we are debtors.

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III. LET US SEE WHAT IS BEST TO BE DONE.

Time warns us that on this division we must be brief indeed, so I will do little else than just mention a few suggestions. *Let us frankly acknowledge our debts.* Let us shun all boasting either in the heart or conversation. If ever we are called to speak of what we are or what we have, let us always take care to let it be known that it is by the grace of God we are what we are, and that it is by the mercy of God we have what we have. Let us never cut a dash at our God's expense, but delight to say "We owe Him for all."

Secondly, *let us walk humbly because of them.* Debtors ought not to lift their heads too high. If they do they forfeit all claim to sympathy. If I see some poor fellow who has been fairly crushed by adverse circumstances, if I mark him walking with downcast eyes and seeming to shun all observation, there is something within me that says "Go and take him by the hand, his burden is heavy enough without your adding to it by want of sympathy." I see the man feels his position, and that is enough to command pity from any heart that is not less than human. But if on the contrary the man grows proud on his poverty, and laughs at his debts and goes ahead more than ever, my heart is steeled against him. Brethren, let us walk humbly with our God, and with all our joy for pardoned sin, let there be an abiding sense of the fact that we are yet debtors and nothing else.

Thirdly, *let us deal leniently with others.* I will tell you an incident and leave you to draw the moral. There was once a servant who owed his lord ten thousand talents, and as he had nothing to pay his lord was about to sell him, his wife, his children, and all he had. Falling on his knees the servant entreated for mercy. Moved by compassion his lord forgave him that great debt. Going forth as a forgiven debtor he happened to meet a fellow servant who owed him the paltry sum of a hundred pence. Taking him by the throat he commanded him to pay the debt, and refusing to listen to his cries for mercy, cast him into prison. Do you wonder that on his lord hearing it, he was wroth, and sued him for his great debt. Brethren, we are debtors, let us forgive those who are indebted unto us.

Lastly, *let us make a willing surrender of all the Lord asks for.* It is the very least return that we can make. Owing Him for everything, we can grudge Him nothing. At least we *should* not. Bought with blood divine, we are no longer our own but His. Having nothing but what we have received from His hands, there should be nothing but what we would with joy give up to His hands again. Brethren, we are debtors. Let us show it by our lives.

Mr. BROWN then made an appeal on behalf of the Tract and Benevolent Society, which was generously responded to.

Scripture Read—Luke VII, from verse 19.
Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—214—235—247.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE WAY OF CAIN.

A Sermon to Young Men,

DELIVERED LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 12TH, 1871, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain."—JUDE 11.

IT was no marvel that the heart of Eve rejoiced when there was born unto her a son. Now that the world teems with its multitudes, the first-born child is always hailed with wonder and delight. But with Eve there was exceeding cause for rejoicing. The child was not only her first-born, but the first-born in the world. In her arms was the first infant that ever smiled or wept. It was more to her than all creation. It was *hers* as nothing else had ever been. The mother's love, until then latent, at once declared itself. That boy was her treasure. It was in him she was to find her all, and so she names him Cain, or 'possession.' Poor Eve! how soon were her joys diminished, her anticipations of perfect happiness in her possession blighted! The name she gave her second son is almost significant of disappointment. She called him Abel or '*vanity*.' Was it because she had already found that a mother's experience was one of no unmingled bliss? Perhaps it was. At all events her first-born, her possession, never became what she, with a mother's hope imagined, and with a mother's faith predicted. Many good names are ill bestowed. If all the names of the young men here this evening were but indicative of the history and character of those who bear them, there would be happier hearts and happier homes than are represented here. In these ranks of young men, what a number of Johns there must be. But alas, the name gives us no assurance that he who bears it has ever with the beloved disciple laid his head upon the Saviour's breast. Can all the Peters that are here say with the apostle "having obtained like precious faith?" Are all the James here to be reckoned as Christ's disciples? Have the Matthews that may be here heard with the evangelist the voice of Jesus saying unto them "follow me?" The name by which we are called is no criterion of the nature we possess, and no true prophecy of the end that awaits us. Cain proved a possession, but a very different one to what his happy mother ever thought when in the moment of maternal joy she named him. His career was a dark one throughout. I should imagine from the few glimpses we have of his character that he was from his boyhood, haughty, self-willed, proud, and desperately daring. His was a spirit that could brook no interference and resented all questioning. Even when called to account by God, he makes a desperate effort to hurl a half-defiance in the face of his Creator. "Am

I my brother's keeper?" is the language of bold, if despairing rebellion. The first-born child proved a murderer. Who can describe the horror of that scene? And who perhaps more horrified than Cain? In these days death is commonplace. It surrounds us on every hand. There are remembrances of it visible in every congregation. We know that every moment some one dies somewhere. Every day, by accident as well as by disease, men are changed to corpses. And as if death moved its scythe too slowly, man has come to its assistance and supplied it with new and devilish weapons of destruction. We have grown almost weary of hearing the oft-repeated tale of tens of thousands strewing the battle-fields of Europe. A human corpse is no novelty now. But it was in the day of Cain, and it is no stretch of imagination to conceive the murderer standing by the bloody corpse aghast with horror and amazement. To quote from a high authority, "It is scarcely to be imagined that Cain should have premeditated Abel's death. If he did, it must have been like an invention to him. He knew indeed that man was to die, and he had seen animals dead; but it was open to question whether he even supposed man liable to death by violence." Burning hatred—angry words—a fearful blow—and the deed was done The first-born man became a murderer, and the second-born a martyr. Fleeing from the field of blood, he is met with by his God. His hardened heart refuses repentance. He goes out "from the presence of the Lord;" builds a city, and seeks in worldly pleasure to drown remorse. Sad end to a joyful commencement. "Woe unto them that go in the way of Cain." Some are perhaps saying "how does this apply to us, what have we to do with Cain?" I answer 'much.' The way of Cain, although an old one, yet remains popular, and as Jude here holds it up as a warning, we cannot be wrong in trying to find out what the Holy Ghost intends to teach by it, and to what practical purposes we can turn it. I shall notice first, that *the way of Cain is the way of sinners in general.* and secondly, that *in one particular the way of Cain is the way of many professors.*

I. THE WAY OF CAIN IS THE WAY OF SINNERS IN GENERAL.

I must here ask for your careful attention as I try and show what the way of Cain truly was. First it was a way of *ignorance.* The whole of the wretchedness of his life, including the unnatural murder of his brother, may be traced to this source. He murdered his brother because he hated him; he hated him because his sacrifice was accepted of the Lord, whilst his own was rejected; his sacrifice was rejected because he offered the wrong offering upon the altar; he gave the wrong offering because he was ignorant of his own state before God, and ignorant of God's requirements. He was willing to worship, but it must be a worship dictated by his taste, and not one in obedience to God's will. Many greatly err in their judgment as to why Abel was accepted and Cain rejected. They try and find the reason in the *men.* Now there was no reason whatever in the men why one should be accepted before the other. Both were sinners, both came of fallen parents, both were born outside Paradise, both were devoid of any righteousness of their own. Yea, if anything in the men had been taken account of, Cain might on the ground of his being the first-born have been most likely to have received favourable notice. Yet he was

the one rejected. The truth is, dear friends, the difference was not in the men, *but in their sacrifices*. If you turn to the fourth chapter of Genesis you will see that in both cases the men are linked with their offerings, "And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect." What was the difference in the two sacrifices that secured the acceptation of one and the rejection of the other? The answer to this question will bring before our notice the most important truth it is possible to imagine. It will also expose the most general mistake of the day. The two sacrifices were as follows, "Cain brought the fruit of the ground," "Abel brought the firstlings of his flock." In the worship of one there was *blood*, in the offering of the other there was *none*. Looked at from this standpoint, the two sacrifices were as far removed as the antipodes. The one was expressive of a religion based on atoning blood, and the other ignored atonement altogether.

The curse that fell on man for sin extended also to the ground he was sent forth to till, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake," were the words uttered by God to Adam.

Now Cain in his offering to the Lord presented that to Him on which the curse already rested and in which was no blood. He was ignorant of the defilement of sin, and ignorant of the fact that as death was the penalty of sin, there must be the recognition of that fact made by him in his approach to God. Cain never took the place of a condemned sinner before the Lord—never said by his sacrifice what Abel did, "I deserve to die." The flowing blood on Abel's altar was eloquent of his conviction of sin, and of his knowledge of his need of an atonement. The flowers and fruits that bedecked the altar of Cain, however lovely they might have been in themselves, made no such confession. They told perhaps of care and perseverance. They were the results of the sweat of his brow, but not the faith of his heart. *They were beautiful but bloodless.* And the sinner has to rest in blood and not in beauty. Ignorant of his own sinnership and ignorant of God's requirements, he offered a sacrifice incompatible with either. No doubt reason might find many excuses for Cain, and approve his offering. It might suggest that as he was a tiller of the ground the most appropriate gift he could make was the fruits of that ground. But reason never did or can find its way to God, and the idea of *giving* to God is reason's great mistake. The sacrifice was not for man to give *to* God, but for man to receive *from* God. It was not reason that led Abel to make the choice he did, but faith. "By *faith* Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain." Faith sees far more clearly of the things of God than the brightest reason. Now the way of Cain is the way of the world now. It has no objection to an intellectual religion. It will willingly give its fruits and its flowers, but it refuses simply to receive through blood. To take the position of a death deserving sinner, and receive pardon through the death of a substitute is too humiliating for its pride. Whichever way you look now even in the professing church of God you find the religion of Cain abounding. Multitudes of sermons are preached without one word in them about the necessity of *blood* in order to salvation. Sinners are told to do their best and give to God of the fruit of their own hands, but never told that without

blood there is no remission of sin. Professors abound whom you neve hear mention the blood of the atonement as the ground of their confidence

Cain's religion is now the most respectable and popular religion of the day. It involves no abasement in the dust; no humiliating confession of sinnership; no absolute dependance out of self. It flatters man's pride,, exalts his reason, and just suits the carnal heart that wants a religion to make his respectability complete. Cain's religion is the curse of the day. It chloroforms men into insensibility and indifference. Had they none there would perhaps be more hope for them, for when sinners were appealed to they would feel they were addressed, but as it is they put themselves down as part of "the religious world," and perhaps a better name could hardly be found to describe them, for they have a religious worldliness, or if you prefer the title a worldly religiousness.

Before I pass on to the second description of Cain's way, I want every one present to test and try his own heart before the Lord. Have I the religion of Cain or that of Abel? Am I resting on the BLOOD, or is my religion a bloodless one? Have I only the external fashionable religion of the day, or am I among those who, taught of faith rather than reason, approach God through the medium of atonement?

These questions may appear to many but of little importance, but the day is fast coming when eternity will depend on the answer we are able to give to them. The polite superficial religion of the world, that acknowledges no sinnership and trusts no blood, will at last be rejected by the Lord as was Cain's sacrifice. My dear brother and fellow young man, if you are resting on anything that you are, or anything you can give, it is only because like Cain you are yet ignorant of your sinfulness and dark as to what God requires, I can but mourn over you and say, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain."

I want now, by God's help, to point out to you the second particular concerning the way of Cain, and that is that it is *a way of worldliness.* I have already said that shortly after the murder of his brother, God spoke to him. The words were surely sufficient to have struck conviction and terror into any heart less soft than a nether mill stone. "Where is Abel thy brother?" How this question must have rung in the ears of the guilty wretch, and brought up before his vision that ghastly form still lying in a pool of blood. "Where is he?" Dumbfounded by the directness of the question and convicted by an accusing conscience he stammers out a lie "I know not," and then, growing bolder in his desperation, retorts, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Vain was the attempt however to keep up a bold front before Jehovah. The reply was a crushing one that bore down the impudence of the sinner. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now thou art cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." From recklessness he turns to despair, and groans out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear," or as it may be translated, "mine iniquity is greater than may be forgiven." Is there no hope for him now? Will he not yet seek mercy through the blood? One passage in the commencement

of the fourth chapter of Genesis may be so translated as to teach that after the Lord had rejected Cain's sacrifice, he yet pointed out to him the way by which he might find mercy. The passage "and if thou doeth not well, sin lieth at the door, may be translated "and if thou doest not well, a *sin-offering* lieth at the door." In other words, God pointed out to him that there was a provison made for the pardon of sin. Convinced now of greatest crime will he seek forgiveness through an offering for sin? Alas no! Hardened and despairing he goes out from the presence of the Lord, *builds a city*, and seeks to drown remorse in pleasure. He and his descendants busy themselves in trying to make this world a pleasant place of residence, and with the sound of the harp and the organ, the guilty man triss to drown the voice of his brother's blood. This is the way of Cain. This is just what the vast majority of mankind is doing. It is trying in the business and pleasures of the city to find its all—forget its God—and drown unpleasant thoughts. Guilty Cain, with all his energies devoted to the building of a city, away from the presence of God, is but a type of tens of thousands of the present day. Who can walk through our city in the daytime, and mark the haggard, anxious faces of the bustling throng without seeing that to multitudes of them this world is everything. They have no world apart from the mart, the exchange, the office, or the shop. Life to them means but a little time in which to scrape wealth. They are busy building their own cities, and building them out from the presence of the Lord. Go through the streets at night, and you will see the same thing in another form. Look at the crowds pouring into our operas, theatres, music halls and worse. What do they teach? Why that the mass of mankind finds its joys away from the presence of the Lord, in its own city. Its pleasure is to get away from God, and all that could remind it of God, and the further away the greater its pleasure. True, the blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel has been shed upon this earth, But what does the world care for that? Speak to them of it, and they will laugh at you for being a fanatic, or else tell you not to spoil their pleasnre by talking of such a dreary subject. The world—the world—the world—this is the way of Cain. Never mind the past, don't trouble about the future, enjoy the present. Get rid of dull thoughts, and if ever a qualm of conscience does arise through the memory of the past, strangle it at once by some new mode of dissipation. But I can imagine some young man replying. "We must keep up with the times, we are living in a different age to the puritanical. This is a fast progressive age, the age of novelties, and you cannot expect us to be behind the period. Stop a moment, dear friend, the way of the period as you call it is a *very old way*, it dates back to the day of Cain. It is no novelty you are indulging in. The first murderer set the fashion, and you are but keeping it. He went from the presence of the Lord to find his joy in a city, and you are but acting the same. Dear young man, let me for a moment speak to you in all kindness as a young man myself. I *do* pity you with all my heart, dear friend, and it is only because this heart is so abominably hard I am not weeping. I pity you for this reason. Your burying yourself in this world's pleasures *does not remove the brand of Cain from off your brow.* Do you start

and feel ready to see if there is a brand upon your forehead? There is dear friend, although no one but God can read it. It reads thus—"*Condemned already.*" "He that believeth not," the scripture tells us "is condemned already." "The wrath of God abideth on him." Cain may go from the Lord but he carries his mark with him. He may build a city, and listen to the sound of the harp and the organ, but the music smooths not the brand away. Dear friend, so it is with you. You cannot run away from your condemnation, it *abideth* on you. You may forget it, but it is there all the same. I ask you in all candour, can a more pitiable object be imagined than the man who with condemnation written on him, yet spends his whole time in seeking to forget it? Poor worldling you who are living for earth and nothing else and spending all your energies to make this world an agreeable and pleasing place of residence. Do listen to the text, "Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain."

Thirdly and lastly on this division of my subject, *the way of Cain is the way to hell.* It is from no desire merely to try and frighten you I use these words. As God's servant I am bound to tell you the whole truth, however unpalatable it may be. Did I not warn you in all faithfulness of the end of the way of Cain I might hear addressed to me the solemn words "Thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." Besides which, how could the subject be complete without? How is it possible to speak fully of any way without telling *where it leads to?* The way of Cain is I repeat, the way to hell. No scripture sheds one gleam of hope upon the way of Cain. Direct reference is only made twice to him in the New Testament, and in both instances he is held up as a warning, and nothing else. The first you will find in the first epistle of John, the third chapter and twelfth verse. "Not as Cain *who was of that wicked one,*" and the second is found in our text and the verses following—"These" (that is those who are like Cain) "are spots in your feast—clouds without water; trees whose fruit withereth—twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Raging waves of the sea foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, *to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.*" Thus you see no hope is even hinted at. The end of the way of Cain is blackness of darkness for ever, Alas! how full of horror is the thought that the way of Cain has been trodden by thousands, and that perhaps numbers of those who have frequented this tabernacle have already discovered its bitter termination. My dear friend, if you have Cain's religion—that is a bloodless one; and if you revel in Cain's pleasures, and if you die like Cain, be not surprised if you have Cain's end. *Cain's religion can only result in Cain's hell.* I do indeed pray God with all my heart that this warning may result in the salvation of some young men this night.

II. One Particular in Cain's Way which is the Way of many Professors.

I have been trying thus far to reach the hearts and consciences of sinners, I desire now for a few minutes to have words given me that shall wake to life the sleeping consciences of some of God's people. I grant that Jude had no reference to the matter when he wrote our text, I only use the incident as an illustration. The particular in the way of Cain I refer to now was his indifference about his murdered brother.

"Where is Abel thy brother?" These were the words that arrested Cain's attention. May they arrest yours. My dear friend I am right glad to see you here this evening, but *where is your brother?* Christian young men, where have you left your brethren this evening? Where are those who are related to you by ties of blood? Where are those bound to you by friendship? Where are those who are your brethren in daily labour—those who work with you in the office, shop, warehouse, or docks? Where is he? *You* are here singing God's praise and listening to God's word, but where did you leave *him?* Is he in the sanctuary, or is he in the public house? Is he in Christ or out of Christ? Is he saved or unsaved? What is your brother's condition in the sight of God? You profess to be a Christian, a follower of Jesus, one whose life is supposed to be a copy of Christ's. You are one bearing the name of Him who when surrounded by a rejoicing group, yet wept when he looked down upon a guilty city and thought of its doom. Well then, as a christian I ask you, "Where is thy brother?" What answer do you give?

Alas, in the way of Cain, I hear some of you reply, "I know not." Stop, sir! that answer will never do. Not know!! I think I see Cain as he utters the words. A burning blush crimsons his brow, and his downcast eyes and quivering face all give the lie to the assertion. He *did* know. Christian, such a miserable falsehood as Cain's is unworthy of you. You feel it as you try to tell it. You *do* know where your brother is, and even if you were ignorant, your ignorance is a crime. You ought to know. Come, be bold, speak out the truth, though it condemns you. Do you still hesitate? Then I will answer for you. Like Cain, you have left your brother *in his blood.* His soul is dead if his body lives. In his blood—yes, that is where your brother lies to-night. O strange, unaccountable, inexcusable indifference. All the while you have been here listening about Cain the thought of a brother in his blood has never crossed your mind. Believer in Jesus, is it not marvellous how cold-hearted we may become concerning the salvation of our brethren? How little have we yet caught the spirit of that noble apostle who could say, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that I was accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

Indifference about souls is the crying sin of the church. Parents, are your children converted—you must know—and if they are not what are you doing to bring them to Christ? Young man, are you a Christian; is your younger brother one? What are you doing for him? Are you turning your back upon him, like Cain, and deliberately leaving him in his blood? May God have mercy on you, if you are His blood crieth unto the Lord from the ground. But perhaps some instead of pleading ignorance are boldly asking "Am I my brother's keeper?" Yes, in a certain sense you are. You are not responsible for his ultimate salvation. I know that and praise God for it. If the saints were responsible for the sinner's salvation, I might well be crushed with despair as I look round upon this throng. But you are responsible for doing all you can to lead to his conversion and from this responsibility there is no escape. O that God might enable each

of us to say at last, I am clear from the blood of souls. But may be we have in our midst this evening, some godless professors who are actually soul murderers. Sad though indifference to dying souls is, this is worse by far. O hypocrite you have not only left a brother in his blood but you have dealt him a murderous blow. Any impressions he ever had have been effaced by your godless life. He has seen you in the sanctuary looking like a saint and he has followed you to the home and seen you act like a devil. Many a taunt already made have you put upon his lip and under the withering influence of your example his soul has become ten-fold blighted. When asked to come to Jesus, his answer has been your life. You have encased him in an armour of steel from which all the shafts of invite glance off. Often has he said pointing to you "If that is your religion God save me from it." O, wretched man "What hast thou done?" what a deed is yours!! It is an *inhuman* deed. It is a brother thou hast slain, one of thine own flesh and blood is lying stricken by thine hand. "What hast thou done?" *A deed thou canst never undo.* Cain may wring his hands in anguish and mingle with the blood his tears. But no tears, no frantic cries of his can give poor Abel life. His hand could give the fatal blow but not avert the consequence.

Professor you may have slain a young man, but you can never give him life. The deed is done. May God have mercy on you and on your victim also. Do you say "But I never meant to do it." perhaps not, nor did Cain. *But it is done.* It is a deed that crieth for vengeance. God heard the cry of Abel's blood, it was "revenge." Its prayer was answered. Surely he will fall deepest into hell who drags others with him. If there be unholy professors here to-night, holding the truth in unrighteousness, may God help them to take this warning.

And now, to conclude, I turn again to the sinner who is yet in the way of Cain, I noticed some of you evidently relishing the remarks I made about inconsistent professors. You quite agreed with them, and I have no doubt pictured different persons whose loose walking you often make serve you for excuse. Stay a moment, friend. Suppose they are hypocrites, and even have at last the hypocrite's doom, will it be any consolation to you in hell to know they are with you? The inconsistencies of professors are no excuse for your unbelief, and cannot save you from its consequences. Where are *you*, dear friend, that is the question that concerns you most. Are you still walking in the way of Cain, trusting in his religion, and seeking his pleasures? Let me show you a more excellent way. It is the way of Christ. Jesus said "I am the way." As a sinner take the sinner's place and plead the blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel. The blood that tells of pardon, peace, joy, heaven. It was shed on calvary's cross and it is from there the way to heaven commences. O, from this night have done with Cain and try Christ. Turn your back upon his bloodless religion and trust the precious blood of Jesus. Go not from this place to drown the voice of Calvary in the noisy mirth of the city, but here, now *quit the way of Cain and trust the way of Christ.* God grant it—Amen.

Scripture Read—Proverbs I.

Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

"AS" AND "SO."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 12TH, 1871, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love."—JOHN xv—9.

THE reason for my selecting this portion for meditation can be best explained by a simple illustration, which will be understood by all present who are in any way acquainted with rural life. You will often have observed, whilst walking along some footpath that winds its way amid the fields, a flock of sheep quietly feeding within an enclosure made by hurdles. Instead of roaming the whole field over they are located upon one small spot, until the shepherd shifting the simple fence, makes the extremest boundary the commencement of another plot of feeding ground, and so on until every portion of the field has in its turn yielded food and sweetness to the flock. The different changes made are not from one pasture land unto another, but from one portion to an adjoining plot of the same great field. As under-shepherd of this flock, I desire this morning to do the same. Just lead you to the green pastures, commencing from where we terminated last Lord's-day. The field is still the same, namely, the fifteenth of St. John, but the portion of that field a different one, yet adjacent.

Last week our souls found sweet refreshment in the thought of our union in Christ—our communion with Christ, and our fruitfulness through Christ. We beheld ourselves as the branches of the vine—yea, part of the vine itself, drawing all our life from the sap flowing through the parent stem. We heard our Saviour's voice telling us to abide in the vine—to have continually His life circulating in us. We saw that all the fruit the branch might ever bear was simply the result of the vine's life abiding in it, and not the result of any separate life possessed by the branch apart from its union with the stem. We then closed, by observing, that according to the statement of Jesus, it is not the fruit, but the abundance of it that glorifies the Father. Grapes on a vine attract no particular notice, they are justly expected. It is the number and size of the bunches that attract the attention of the stranger. So with Christians. Some fruit every ordinary saint will bear, but it is *much* fruit that glorifies the Father of our fruitfulness. These thoughts brought us down to the eighth verse of this chapter, and I felt last week, when looking for a text, that having found the food so sweet, it were only wise to lead the flock of God unto the

adjoining verse, and not altogether quit the pasture for another. But here the illustration with which I commenced this discourse breaks down and fails, as must all earthly illustrations of heavenly truths. The shepherd moves his flock because the spot is eaten bare, and fails to give continuance of food. Not so with us. The pastures of the word can never fail. Their fulness never be exhausted. Their supply never cease to be equal to demand. The more they are made the subject of the feast, the more their fulness and their freshness grows. No spot in the entire meadow-land of Scripture is one degree less clothed with verdure through the entertainments it has given to the flock of God. Always rich—always sweet—always wet with the dew of heaven are the green pastures into which the great Shepherd leads His sheep.

The subject for this morning's contemplation is pre-eminently a blessed one. It tells of a Saviour's love, and explains that love by the most marvellous type that Christ Himself could use. The whole verse revolves around the axis comprised in the two little words "as" and "so." "*As* the Father hath loved me, *so* have I loved you." Christ's love to us is described as being identical with the Father's love to Him. Fathom the "as," and you will have sounded the "so." Measure the former, and you will then have learnt the dimensions of the latter. Grasp, if you can, what that love is that dwells in the heart of the Father toward the Son, and then, and not until then, will you know what is the love in the heart of Jesus toward you. You will see at once dear friends, that we have a subject vast and boundless. May the Holy Spirit direct the preacher into all truth, and put upon his lips such words as shall bring the divine comparison instituted in the text home to every heart with power. There are two things found in the verse which shall serve us as divisions. First, we have *an amazing comparison*, "*As* the Father hath loved me, *so* have I loved you," and, secondly, we have *a loving admonition*, "continue ye in my love."

I. First then, let us meditate upon AN AMAZING COMPARISON. I have already said, that *if* we are able to understand the love of the Father to Christ, we shall then be able to understand the love of Christ to us. Here is an "if" indeed. How can the finite measure that, which, in itself, is infinite? The difficulty is increased also by the matter of contemplation. It is love—Divine love. The love of Him who *is* love. The love of God to Christ. I find it easier to form in some measure, a conception of His power than I do of His love. True, both are infinite. But then one is a matter of His arm, whilst the other concerns His heart. On every hand I can perceive His might. The sun marching in its course by day, and the stars gliding along their paths by night, both alike declare a power that is infinite, for it is He that hath set "a tabernacle for the sun," and as for the stars, "He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power, not one faileth." Moreover, power, wisdom and glory seem things that one *may* venture to speak about, but a peculiar sacredness, almost commanding silence, surrounds the deep love of the heart. That heart, the heart of God and the object of that love, His Son. As we approach the subject with a feeling akin to awe, we almost fancy we can hear with Moses, the voice of God, saying, "Put

off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place on which thou standest is holy ground." The love of God to Christ—here is the "as." Whilst pondering on this mighty "as" in the quiet of my study, the scene around me changed. Familiar objects seemed to fade away, and in imagination, I stood upon a shore. Stretching out before me was an ocean. Far as the eye could reach there was water everywhere. As I stood contemplating this vast expanse, I thought I heard a voice saying to me, "The ocean on which thou art gazing has no other shore. Before thee—to the right—to the left—it has no bound, no limit. Form an idea of its extent." My mind was staggered, and I answered, "How can I measure that which has no boundary, knows no end?" The voice again said, "The ocean on which thou lookest has no bottom —fathom it." Overwhelmed, I replied, "How can I sound that which is all depth?" This ocean awed me by its calm. No wave, no ripple broke or murmured on the shore on which I stood. I felt as if it was too vast to heave, too deep to know disquiet. It was the ocean of the Father's love to Christ. Again, the scene changed, and I found myself standing at the foot of a giant mountain. By its side all other mountain ranges were dwarfed to mole hills. Astonished, I looked upwards to the towering peaks only to find there were higher still. Sight failed and the spirit quailed, whilst the same voice I had heard before said, "*This mountain has no top*—climb it." Ah! how? Who can gain a summit when there is none? It was the love of God to Christ which in its height and depth, and length and breadth, is measureless.

Behold, beloved, the boundlessness of the "as" Fathom it—encircle it—scale it—are but impossibilities. All we can hope to do is just mention some of its leading features, and then try and show you that the leading features of the "as" are also the leading features of the "so." First, then the love of the Father to the Son was *supreme* love. Higher than the highest—deeper than the deepest—longer than the longest—broader than the broadest. It was love beyond all love. The greatest love wherewith the God of love could love. It was a love into which the whole divine power of loving was thrown. It were foulest blasphemy to imagine it possible for Christ to be loved with a greater love. Here is the "as." Now turn to the "so." "So have I loved you." Christ loves His people with an affection that is incapable of increase. It is no comparative love, but a superlative. The whole heart of Christ loves every saint to its utmost power. I know this is often hard to realize. Painfully conscious of our own utter unworthiness, and of our ten-thousand inconsistencies, we often feel that if Jesus will but show us just bare mercy and pity, it is all we can dare to ask. But, dear friend, this is wrong. It is judging our Lord's love by our own; it is bringing Him down to our own low level. We have nothing to do with what we feel, but what he has *said*; and he has declared His love to us to be the same as His Father's love to Him. Doubt the latter you dare not—then do not doubt the former.

The only true way of judging love, is by what love will do. O, try the love of Jesus by this test. See if it be possible for Him to give higher or deeper proofs than those He has given. The greatest exhibition of love is for a man to lay down his life for his friends, but

Jesus has far exceeded this proof. He gave His life for His enemies. He endured Gethsemane, and stooped to Calvary for His foes.

"And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony,
Yea, death itself and all for me,
Who was thine enemy."

And now, although exalted high, "his love is still as great." Poor trembling down-cast soul, take this thought into thy heart this morning and let it be a solace to thee. Jesus loves thee with a love as infinite as the Father's love to Him.

The love of the Father to the Son was also an *eternal* love. If you will turn with me to the seventeenth chapter of this Gospel, and the twenty-fourth verse, you will read, "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Here we are brought face to face with one of those truths that can never be grasped by the mind, but only believed in the heart. Who can form a conception of what eternity is? Who can explain in language the meaning of the word "everlasting?" There is something almost awful in the deep of a past eternity. Go back as far as the mind can imagine, it is always infinitely *before* that. What ages have rolled their courses since the solid foundations of the world were laid—how far remote that time when "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." But the Father loved the Son *before* the foundation of the world. Go we back in thought to the time when no world was, when space knew not a star; yea, further back than that, when not an angel was, when not a single "son of the morning" had ever raised his voice, and we find *before* that the Father loved the Son. From all eternity, when God alone was everywhere and everything nowhere, the Son dwelt in the bosom of the Father. There never was a moment when Christ was not the well-beloved. Here, dear friends, you have the "as," and that an eternal one. Now turn to the "so." "So have I loved you." Old as the Father's love to the Son, is the Son's love to His people. Child of God, the love of Jesus, unto you is no love of yesterday. Listen to His word, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Before the foundation of the world He had thoughts of love to you, for even then He was in purpose "the Lamb slain." In the council chamber of eternity His heart yearned over you, and made Him cry "Save from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom. The "so" has ever run parallel with the "as." There never was a time when Jesus did *not* love you. O, what infinite value does this thought give to "the love of Christ to me." I would abide under its influence. I would revel in its sweetness. The love I know and feel He has to me this morning dates back with the love the Father ever had to Him.

"His love, from eternity fix'd upon you,
Broke forth, and discover'd its flame,
When each with the cords of His kindness He drew,
And brought you to love His great name."

The Father's love to the Son was also *an unfluctuating love*. Our Saviour says, concerning it, "I do always abide in His love." It is impossible to imagine a momentary alteration in the divine love of the

Father. It is a deep, deep ocean, that knows no flow or ebb. It is love that rests in infinite complacency in Christ. It is always at the fullest. There you have the "as," now listen to the "so." "So have I loved you." I frankly confess, dear friends, that it is this view of Christ's love I find most difficult to realize in my own soul. I can far easier imagine a love that has no end, than a love that knows no variation in degree of intensity. When one looks within, and watches the changing experience of the heart—when one finds it to-day burning with a returning love, and to-morrow frozen up and coated with the ice of indifference, it is indeed hard to realize that the affection of Jesus has known no corresponding alterations. It is so natural to measure our Saviour's love to us by ours to Him, and think that because we *feel* more of His love, therefore there is more. But blessed be God although we cannot always grasp the fact, yet the fact remains.

"His is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above;
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death."

"What," I think I can hear one of you saying, "Do you mean to say that Jesus loves me just as much when I am depressed, and deep down in the dark valley, as when I am full of sunshine, and standing on the mount of God?" Yes, I do, dear friend, *quite as much*. His love was never begotten by anything he saw in you, and can therefore never be changed by anything about you. The roots of love are deep within His own heart, and therefore the fruits are never increased or diminished by aught in you. Surely, of all thoughts one can possibly have of the love of Jesus, it were impossible to find one more full of refreshment and joy to the sorrowing saint, than the thought of its unchangeableness. Jesus finds His joy in loving His people. Is it bliss to me to be beloved by Him? It is also a cause for song on His part to love. He finds satisfaction in His love. He rests in it.

"The Lord thy God, in the midst of thee, is mighty; He will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; *He will rest in His love*, He will joy over thee with singing." Yes, child of God, your Saviour's love, unlike your own, is a *resting* love. It rests on the person, never leaving him. It rests in degree, never varying in itself. When the Father's love to the Son fluctuates, and not until then, need you fear the love of Christ ever altering in its intensity towards you.

The Father's love, moreover, was *one of complacency*. This is the highest kind of love—far beyond the love of compassion or the love of pity. It is a love full of pleasure and satisfaction in the person loved. "This is my beloved Son, *in whom I am well pleased*." These words give us an insight into the nature of the Father's love. It is love unmingled with sorrow or disappointment. It is love reposing—love rejoicing—love singing. Now turn to its counterpart. "So have I loved you." The love of Jesus is something far more than compassionate love. Let me illustrate what I mean by compassionate love. Walking through the streets, I may, perchance, come across some little denizen of the gutter, crying enough to break its heart. The big tears roll down the little dirty cheeks in quick succession. Something makes me stop and ask the little fellow the cause for all this grief. Broken

by many a sob, he tells me he has lost his way, and wants to find his mother. I cannot leave him in his piteous distress. Compassionate love says, "Wipe his eyes, take his little grimy hand in yours; never mind if you do look singular with such a companion; dont leave him until you find his home, and return him to his half-distracted mother."

Now perhaps this work may occupy many an hour, and overthrow a dozen plans I have drawn out for the day. Never mind! It cannot be helped. The child must be looked to first. Now this is the love of compassion, but not complacency, for during all the time there is no sweet fellowship between us. I may not even be well pleased with the child. It was his state, not himself, that was the object and the care of love. Far different this to the walk of bosom friends, who find *mutual* delight in each other's company. That is the love of complacency. Dear friend, Jesus finds His delight in you if you are His. True, His love commenced as the love of compassion. He "found us wandering, set us right," but now that love has mellowed into one of infinite satisfaction. He not only refreshes, but is refreshed by communion with His people. Not only does He make and keep His church as His garden, but walking in that garden, He is himself refreshed. This truth is most beautifully and poetically taught in the Canticles. "Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek Him?" is the question asked of the spouse. Mark the answer—"My beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to *feed* in the gardens, and to gather bliss. I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine; *he feedeth among the lilies.*"

Believer in Jesus, try and grasp this thought, it will be a source of unbounded joy to you. Your Saviour rests in His love, reposes in His affection towards you. He delights in you as much as ever you delight in Him. He says, concerning you, as the Father said concerning Him, "In whom I am well pleased."

It was also a love *manifested in the time of humiliation.* Not only is love precious, but also the time and way in which it declares itself. The deeper our state of trial and humiliation, the more valued will the manifestation of an unaltered affection become. It is only natural it should be so, for alas, it is too often this test that proves too much for professed friendship. When was it the Father first gave from heaven the glorious declaration of His complacent love? I answer, at Christ's baptism. It was at the moment of our Lord's condescending obedience that the Father broke silence, and declared, "This is my beloved Son." The Father's love remained unaltered by the Son's humiliation. The same love that had rested on Christ during an eternity of glory followed Him through the shame of earth, and refused to leave him at the cross. Here is the "as," now turn to the "so." "So have I loved you." Christ's love to His people is never withdrawn on account of any humiliation or suffering they may be called to bear. You may be called to pass through a very baptism of fiery trial, the heat of which will scorch up almost all the professed friendship now made, but hovering over you, like a dove, will still remain the love of Jesus. Like the Hebrew youths, there may be in store for you a furnace seven times heated, but you will find, when cast into its flaming mouth, that there is one "Like unto the Son of God," who

will walk the furnace with you. The deeper the trial, the nearer the Saviour. When most needed, the Saviour's love is always most felt. Fear not, tried child of God, that Jesus will ever be afraid to own you for His friend, for *as* the Father loved Him in His deepest abasement, *so* will He ever manifest His love to you in your times of greatest grief.

Once more, and lastly, upon this amazing comparison. The Father's love *only found its culmination in glory*. He raised up Christ on the third day, and shortly after our Saviour ascended to enter into His mediatorial glory. O! who can describe that triumphal entry, when the everlasting gates lift up their heads to let the King of glory in? Who tell the honours paid the Son when he ascended the throne, and took His place at the Father's right hand? His prayer is answered, "Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." The "as" is one that reaches heaven. *The "so" meets it there.* Christ so loves us that He will have us by His side. As He shares the glory of the Father, so will He have us share His. Listen to the wondrous yearning of His heart after his peoples' company. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be *with me* where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; *for* thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Here you have the Father's love to Christ linked with Christ's prayer for our glory. O, blessed love of Jesus!!

"Love, which will not let Him rest,
Till His chosen all are blest;
Till they all for whom he died
Live rejoicing by His side."

Thus much for our first division, on which we have dwelt longer than we anticipated, but too shortly to satisfy our desire. Christ's love to us, like the Father's love to Him, is supreme, eternal, unfluctuating, full of complacency, manifested in time of humiliation, and culminating in glory.

II. A LOVING ADMONITION. "Continue ye in my love." Well can I imagine one of you saying, "Whatever does that mean? Have you not just been telling us that the love of Jesus knows no variation, and never ceases to encircle the saint? Why then are we told to continue in that love? I will try and explain what I think our Lord meant by these words. Although His love abideth always *upon* us, yet we are not always consciously living *in* it. Our Saviour having just described to his disciples what His love was, now gently admonishes them *to live in its influence.* Our appreciation of, and joy in, His love is a very different thing to the love itself. The latter never changes, the former hardly ever remains the same. Yet it is only in proportion as we live in the love of Jesus that we can live a happy and useful life. It is a sad, sad fact, that many seem almost ignorant of such a life. There are christians *and* christians. There are church members *and* church members. Have we not all come across many whom we could not dare to unchristianize, but who yet seem ignorant of the fact, that there is such a thing as living, walking, and working under the influence of a realized Saviour's love!

To live under this influence is to live *within a charmed circle of light.* O, be not content to dwell outside this happy sphere. To be saved, but only just saved. To enter heaven at last, but never know what it is to have heaven in your own soul on earth. If, up to the present, you have been a christian living in another atmosphere than that of Christ's love, be not content to remain any longer so. Listen to the gentle admonition of Jesus this morning, "Continue ye in my love." Do you ask, "What is the secret of so doing?" I answer, or rather your Saviour does, *obedience.* Kindly turn with me to the tenth verse of this chapter, and there you will read, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall *abide in my love;* even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. Turn also to the previous chapter, the twenty-first verse, and onwards, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, *and will manifest myself to him.* Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" Now mark the answer. "Jesus answered, and said unto him, if a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, *and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.*" The disobedient child will never have the sweet manifestations of a Saviour's love that he will have who keeps the words of Jesus. If my life is not in harmony with the Saviour's commandments, it is foolish to expect the Father and the Son to come and make their abode with me. A disobedient walk will ever prove a barrier to my entering and dwelling within the bright region of a Saviour's realized love. Grieving the Spirit of God, and resisting His gentle drawings to a higher life, will render my continuing in Christ's love an impossibility. Beloved friends, permit me to plead with you and my own heart to be no longer strangers to this heavenly experience. If we are, we are strangers to a joy that is unutterable in its fulness. It was Christ's love to his disciples, and His desire for their joy that made him thus admonish them, for he says, in the eleventh verse, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, *and that your joy might be full.*" God, in His mercy, give unto you and me a daily increase of this fulness of joy which comes from abiding in that amazing love, concerning which our dear Redeemer says, "*As* the Father hath loved me, *so* have I loved you."—Amen.

Scripture Read—John XVII.
Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book.—424—787—797.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

AN EMERALD RAINBOW.

A Sermon

DELIVERED LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 16TH, 1871, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"There was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."
Revelations iv—3.

THE apostle John had but just received a glorious revelation as recorded in the previous chapters, when he had tokens given him to expect fuller manifestations yet of things to come. It happened thus. One day as he was gazing upwards from his rocky, sea-girt home of exile, he beheld a portion of the blue canopy roll back, and lo! "a door was opened in heaven." Astonished, he watches this strange phenomenon, and awaits the result. He is not left long in doubt. A voice clear and sonorous, resembling the blast of a trumpet, calls him, and commands "Come up hither," and promises him a sight of things yet veiled in futurity. With the command came also the power, for immediately the apostle was in the spirit, and borne aloft by celestial wings, he entered through the gate into the city. The first object that met his enraptured sight was a throne all-glorious in itself, but the glory of which was in a moment forgotten by the view of Him who sat thereon. Notice how particular John is in declaring it was no vacant throne on which he gazed, "behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne." True to the experience of all believers, he thinks far more of a risen Saviour than all the grandeur of that Saviour's palace. It was not the throne, but Him who occupied it that rivetted his attention and his thoughts. There *are* vacant thrones in heaven, but this one is never among them. The vacant thrones are those reserved for saints on earth who, unnoticed by the world, and often steeped in poverty, are yet uncrowned monarchs, and but await the moment of death to enter on their public regal state. But this throne was no throne for a redeemed one, but the throne of the Redeemer himself. It was Christ's throne of grace, the translated exile then beheld. The same which in the tabernacle of old was sometimes filled with the shining glory of His presence. Transferred from earth to heaven the glory never departs, the manifested presence never becomes dim, for Jehovah Jesus after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for *ever* sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting until his enemies be made his footstool. After mentioning the throne, and declaring that one sat upon it, the apostle goes on to describe the royal occupant. "And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone." What was it that gave this flashing, glowing beauty to Him who sat upon the throne? Was it the brightness of those gems which

as high priest he wore upon his breast, the dazzling beauty of which rendered it impossible for human eye to detect all the different hues? Perhaps so. Suffice it for us the aspect of the whole exalted Saviour was such as John could only compare to the united glory of the jasper and the sardine.

The jasper was a stone of brilliant white, the sardine one of blood-red glow. "White and ruddy" was our Beloved, as beheld by the apostle. It is not our purpose this morning to expatiate upon the meaning hidden in these blended colors. We will simply say that they have been thought to teach the two-fold relationships of Christ, namely, to His people and to His enemies. To the former, the light of His countenance is as jasper—clear as crystal—to the latter His frown is as the angry colour of the fiery sardine. Whilst he occupies the throne to ever intercede for His chosen ones, He also waits for his foes to be beneath his feet. The mercy and majesty—the love and justice of our Saviour blended, alone set forth the completeness of His glory. The third thing that demanded the apostle's notice was a rainbow remarkable for many things. No ordinary bow was this—no common semicircle of blended hues. It was a complete rainbow, not broken in half, but stretching round the throne. It was a circle of beauty. Not only was its form exceptional, but its colour also. It was we read "in sight like unto an emerald." The gentle hue of emerald green predominated over all the fiercer colours. It was soothing to the sight. Here I think I can detect infinite mercy. Surely it would have been all but an impossibility for John to have endured the insufferable light of the jasper and the sardine, had not their effulgence been mellowed and softened by the emerald bow through which he then beheld them. Let us for a few minutes this morning get within the gentle light of this bow, and try to discover its heavenly teaching. We will have but two divisions, and those very simple ones, First, *the rainbow*, and secondly, *its position*, "round the throne."

I. The Rainbow. This was a sign and symbol intended to teach some truth. What? I think there can be but little question, if any, that this emerald rainbow is a lovely figure of *the covenant of grace*. No other idea has ever been linked with the rainbow than that of being a token of covenant. Let me remind you of the earliest record we have of the bow in the cloud. Noah and his family have for many weary weeks been living in the ark that floated over a drowned world. At last, as we read at the commencement of this service, God remembered Noah and caused the waters to abate from off the face of the earth. The ark rests upon the mountains of Ararat, and when the earth has become dried, the God who has shut them in, opens the door and bids them go forth into what was virtually a new world. Filled with boundless gratitude for his salvation, the first thing Noah does is to build an altar unto the Lord and offer burnt offerings. The smoke ascends to heaven as a sweet savour, and God blesses the worshipper. And now lest Noah should live in perpetual dread of a second flood, Jehovah enters into a covenant with him that there shall no more be a flood to destroy the earth, and to keep this covenant in remembrance, he adds a token "I do set my bow in the cloud, and I will look upon it that I may remember the everlasting covenant I have made." From that moment the rainbow became a pledge of safety—a

sign of covenant. It was so looked upon by God when His Spirit spake through Isaiah, and said "for this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wrath with thee, nor rebuke thee, for the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall *the covenant of my peace* be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Surely John would in a moment catch the blessed meaning of that emerald bow. It was that the covenant of grace encircles the throne of heaven.

Let us now see in what respects the rainbow serves as an illustration of the covenant, and first—*the rainbow is the child of the cloud and the sun.* There can be no bow without the black rain cloud, it is necessary for the background. Yet on the other hand, the dark cloud is of itself utterly powerless to give birth to the smiling arch of light. The bright rays of the sun are requisite to paint its glowing colours. It is the junction of the two that results in mercy's pledge. If I may so express it, it is only when the sun with its rosy lips kisses the dark face of the storm cloud that it becomes wreathed with beauty. Is not this a picture of the covenant of grace? There can be no *grace* where there is no unworthiness. The very word implies complete want of merit. It is only to a fallen creature that grace can offer itself. The black cloud of our depravity and sinfulness has by the infinite wisdom of God been made subservient to the exhibition of His mercy and His grace. But as the cloud alone can make no rainbow glitter on its breast; so sin left to itself can never relieve its gloom, the sun must shine. Here O my soul rejoice and sing, and tell the matchless triumph of your Lord. Had no gleam of mercy shone—had no sun of righteousness arisen, then for ever must mankind have lived in the outer darkness of despair, but lo! the remedy was provided before the disease broke out, the restoration was secured before the fall took place. From all eternity Jesus was the lamb slain, and before we stood in Adam, our human head, we stood in Christ, our divine representative. No sooner did man fall, and consequently the cloud gather, than the light which had been shining from before all time flew apace and darting through the gloom, kissed with its golden rays the threatening cloud. In a moment there was a heavenly transformation, a belt of light encircled the cloud in the shape of that sweet promise given to our parents "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

Mercy met misery, and the result was the covenant of grace. But although it is owing to the cloud that the bow is seen, yet it is equally true that the bow does not *rest* upon the cloud, it is suspended by the hand of God. Man's depravity forms the dark background that throws up in glorious contrast the brightness of God's grace, but the covenant, blessed be His name, rests on other foundations. It is founded on the purposes of God, and although its sweet engagements are for man, they rest not on man; it is a covenant of "I will" and "thou shalt." Did it rest on anything less fixed, its arch of hope would have been broken ten thousand times Let us pass on to another resemblance. *The rainbow is beautiful for its variety.* True, in this bow which John saw, the colour green so predominated that it appeared as a whole like emerald. Of this I purpose to speak presently, but now I am running

the parallel between the covenant of grace and rainbows in general, and I need not tell you of the charming variety ever seen in them. We have all beheld the orange and the green and the red so melting the one in the other, that it has been difficult to say where one ended and the other commenced. In all God's works, from the moss on the wall to the clouds in the air; from the daisy of the lawn to the stars in skies, variety abounds; but nowhere is this more beautifully manifested than in the bow that succeeds the storm. Stay, I correct myself! there *is* something in which more colours blend and harmonize, it is the covenant of grace. All the covenant, like the rainbow, is but one, yet what a multitude of different blessings are found within its range. All I am and all I have, and all I hope to be when Jesus comes, the covenant includes. What is the first step in a sinner's salvation, I mean the first step taken on earth? Why certainly, his *call*. That call which carries with it power, draws him from the world and makes him willing to be saved God's way. Whence comes this willingness? Why has his old stubbornness departed? The answer is, it is secured in the covenant, "Thy people shall he willing in the day of thy power." Never wouldst thou have come to Jesus had not the spirit called thee, and the spirit called thee in accordance with the gracious covenant. O sweet colour in the heavenly rainbow, well may I sing

"Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?

'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly *forced* me in;
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin."

But when called and convinced by the spirit what *repentance* was ours!! what bitter tears we shed, how we upbraided our wicked hearts for holding out so long!! Whence came this repentance and joyful grief? Did it spring from self? Was it our hand that opened the fountains of the great deep of our soul? No, repentance is a gift from heaven, and one of the blessings of the covenant, for I read concerning Jesus, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour for to *give* repentance to Israel." Being now called and convinced, the sinner exercises *faith*, and reposes his soul upon the finished work and all glorious atonement of Jesus. O, marvellous act, whereby a sinner becomes a saint, an heir of wrath a child of God. May not the soul say concerning faith, "this is at least, my work?" No, it is but another colour in the varied covenant; He who gives calling gives faith also. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves—*it is the gift of God.*"

Immediately after faith comes an intense yearning after *holiness*, and with the yearning there will be a gradual growing up into the likeness of Christ. The beauty of holiness will begin to be apparent, and as days and years pass by, it will shine more and more unto the perfect day. Has the covenant anything to do with this, or is it merely an addenda to the work of the covenant, the result of the soul's own unaided efforts? The answer is at once given by scripture, "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that *we*

should be holy and without blame before Him in love, for whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." Holiness which is the road to heaven is as much provided for in the covenant as that we should be saved at all. "From Me," saith the Lord, "is thy fruit found." How sweet also is the exercise of *prayer*, it is as natural for a child of grace to pray as for a child of nature to cry. The christian *must* pray. Does this come of himself, or is it like all we have mentioned, a gift of God included in the covenant of grace? The answer to this question is just as readily given in scripture as to the former. "Likewise the spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." No prayer ever yet ascended up to God, but what first came down from God, Our happiest seasons of communion are but one of the hues of the many coloured rainbow of grace. Yet once again. Living in the world of sin and grief, subject to daily trials and burdens we need a *strength* sufficient for our day. Native strength at its strongest, is but native weakness. We feel we need a power that can always be equal to the uncertain demands that may be made upon it. Beloved, we have it. There is one radiant streak of glory in the covenant, I cannot dare to pass in silence. If I say but little on it, I must just point you to it, and let it speak for itself. Meeting our daily requirements and including the most extraordinary circumstances that can possibly fall to our lot it says, "thy shoes shall be iron and brass,; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." O say believer, was I not right when I said that no rainbow earthly eye has ever seen possessed such varied charms, such countless colours as the rainbow of our God's covenant with us. Another thought occurs to me connected with this portion of our subject. It is in the rainbow we see the component parts of the one colour light; that colour appears to us as white, but in the bow we behold it broken up and distributed into its different shades. So is it in the covenant of grace; it is in that, the varied beauties of our God are best discerned. "God is light," and as such His very brightness dazzles—His glory becomes a darkening veil. Where is it that we can with unblinded eyes behold the beauty of our God? If we turn to nature we only find a manifestation of His eternal power and Godhead, a manifestation which like the sun in the meridian tells of streaming light. It is to the covenant of His grace we must turn, and there at once we discover the different colours which united, make the LIGHT. It is there we see the red of His justice blending with the violet of his mercy, the orange of his truthfulness kissing the emerald green of his compassion. God to be seen with delight must be viewed as a God in covenant.

Again the rainbow is an emblem of reconciliation and security, it was so to Noah, it told him that wrath was over and that mercy reigned, and it softly whispered that never more need he tremble for fear of another coming deluge. It was God's pledge to him of future safety. Did fear ever take possession of his breast when a more than ordinarily dark cloud gathered upon the horizon, he had but to behold the smiling arch in order to have his fears scattered, and believe that it was only "big with mercy, and would break in blessings on his head." Is it not so with the covenant? Does it not gleam with mercy and

sing of reconciliation? As John beheld it, it appeared "like unto an emerald." The softest and most refreshing colour to the eye was the one that predominated and mellowed all the rest. Mercy is triumphant in the covenant, and rightly has our God called it "the covenant of my peace." Even the fiery red of the sardine stone, may be beheld with joy through the softening medium of the emerald. Well might we sing as we did just now.

"Thy covenant the last accent claims,
Of this poor faltering tongue;
And *that* shall the first notes employ,
Of my celestial song."

Child of God, get your assurance and confidence from the conditions of the covenant. The reason why many live devoid of all abiding peace is because they seek for it in the wrong place. They look within, they watch their changing experiences, they analyze their frames and feelings and then wonder they are a prey to doubts and fears. I should wonder if they were not. The one place and the only place where full assurance flourishes is just under the radiant bow of God's gracious covenant. Never mind what you feel, or what unbelief mutters in your ears. The thing is, what has God said about Christ in covenant? Find that out and live upon it, and you will reach an atmosphere where no clouds or storms can rise. God has said "I will look upon the bow," well then, do you look upon it too, for in that you are reconciled to Him with a reconciliation that He has declared shall never be broken. *The rainbow was God's handiwork.* "I do set *my* bow in the cloud." Jehovah fashioned the light and bent this bow, He set it also in the heavens. Noah might look at it, but he could never have made it. Its very value as a pledge of security arose from the fact that it was God's, not man's. So with the everlasting covenant of grace, from first to last it is God's. It is His in *conception.* It was the mind of infinite wisdom first drew a plan whereby the guilty might be saved—whereby God might be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth. It bears upon its very surface the impress of Him whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. It is His in *provision.* All that was necessary for its accomplishment has been provided by the same One who sketched the marvellous plan. The sacrifice—the blood—the power are all found apart from man. His finger has never been raised to supply one requisite. It is His also in *execution.* This I have already attempted to demonstrate. The power that convinces—the grace that draws—the faith that accepts—the peace that follows—the security that abides, are all, all of God.

Lastly on this division, on which I have dwelt for longer than I intended. *This rainbow never melts.* The one on which Noah gazed soon lost its brilliancy, fainter and fainter still it grew, until like a coloured haze it just quivered in the air and then faded from the sight. Ten thousand rainbows since then have arched this earth then melted in the clouds, but *this* abideth ever. It shone with undiminished brilliancy when John beheld it round the throne, and from eternity it had been there. It gleams in heaven this morning with hues as fresh as ever, and when time has run its course and given place unto eternity it shall remain for ever the subject of the ceaseless song of spirits glorified in heaven.

II. Its Position. This rainbow was round about the throne. As I have remarked previously, this bow was an exceptional one in its form, being a complete circle, and as such going completely round the throne. Surely there are some truths hidden here that will, if found, well repay research. I will but mention a few ideas that have been suggested to myself and others by this position. First then, may not the fact of the rainbow being all round the throne teach that *God in all His persons is included in the covenant of grace?* It is a blessed truth that it is so. The covenant embraces the whole Trinity, not one of the persons is omitted. The bow encircles the whole throne. Father, Son and Holy Ghost all have their glorious part in the salvation of man by grace. The Father chooses and makes over the subjects of His choice into the hands of the Son; the Son receives them, fallen as they are, and covenants to make the provisions necessary for their eternal safety. These provisions are—an atonement to satisfy the righteous demands of a justice they have outraged; blood to cleanse their souls steeped in blackest sin; righteousness to justify and give them title to everlasting bliss. The Spirit's blessed work is equally as necessary and must never be forgotten in our praises. He covenants to convince the sinner of the necessity for a Saviour: to make him feel his sins to be a grievous load: to break the hard heart and set it seeking after mercy: to heal it when broken; lead to Christ's atoning blood and give it peace. The spirit never speaks of itself, but takes of the things of Jesus and reveals them to blind eyes. As it was in the first creation of man, so it is in the second. The whole Trinity works. In the formation of man, God said "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after our likeness." And in the restoration of man to God's image, it is still "let *us* do it." The rainbow is round about the throne, including God in all His persons.

"Give to the Father praise,
Give glory to the Son,
And to the Spirit of His grace
Be equal honour done."

Being round the the throne *it was always in view.* I speak with reverence, but it was impossible for Him who sat upon the throne not to behold the rainbow, it was around Him on every side; its emerald hue would be ever attracting attention. John only saw Him who was like jasper through the bow, and He only looked upon John *through* the same hallowed medium. Believer, do you catch the blessed truth my soul is anxious to convey? It is this—God only looks upon His people as they are in covenant relationship with Himself. Whenever He sees them, He beholds the glory of the emerald rainbow abiding upon them. It were indeed a sad, sad thing for us did our God look upon us as we are in ourselves, but heart-rejoicing fact, He never beholds us apart from Christ, our covenant head. He looks not upon our sinful sinstained persons, but on the perfect righteousness of His Son, which covers us as with a garment. So are we ever in His sight "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." We sometimes forget the covenant, but He never. Depressed by sinfulness and deluded by unbelief we often forget the emerald bow around the throne, and only think with fear of Him who shines like the jasper and glows like the sardine. He never forgets it. Round Him on every hand it ever remains in sight. Being round the throne, it follows that *no matter in what way*

God comes out to His people, He ever comes forth in the way of covenant' that is through the rainbow. Doubtless there are many of us here this morning rejoicing in the loving-kindness of our God; mercy of all sorts has been scattered upon our path; we have health, strength, happy homes and ten thousand comforts denied to others; the sun of prosperity is shining upon our life, making all things bright and gladsome; care is almost unknown, and sorrow a comparative stranger. Well, let us rejoice in so happy a lot, but at the same time let us not forget we have none of these happinesses on the ground of our merits. It is all of grace—all of covenant mercy. Let this thought save us from indulging pride or vain glory. But there are many here who have an experience the very reverse of this. Care is a constant companion and sorrow never absent. The body is sick—the home is sad—many a comfort wanting, bereavement has torn the heart, and difficulties distract the mind; no sun of temporal prosperity shines, but the whole heaven is black with clouds of adversity. Well, dear friend, and are you to suppose from this that God has forgotten you and ceased to be gracious? Let the thought be far from you. Different though God's dealings with you are to others, they are just as much in covenant. He has come through the same rainbow to chasten you as He did to prosper others, whilst in the former case we remembered this to save us from vain glorying; we ask you to remember it to keep you from dark despair. Afflictions are no proof of want of love or covenant relationship, for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Let providences be bright or black, pleasing or painful, they are equally in the way of covenant.

Lastly, and for a moment only. As the rainbow was all round the throne, it follows that there is no coming unto God but *through* it. Sinner, wouldst thou be saved? Then thou must be saved by grace. There is no coming to God by merit. Cast away all dependance upon thine own works and rest for salvation upon the grace of God in Christ. Art thou afraid and trembling because of the blood-red glow of the sardine? Behold the emerald rainbow nearer to thee than the fiery stone, and encouraged by its gentle smile approach and trust. The Lord bring us all to heaven, and throughout eternity will we sing the praises of that rainbow which is like "unto an emerald." AMEN.

Scripture Read—Genesis viii. and ix.—9th to 17th verses.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—104—228—241.

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ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
17, Bancroft Road, Mile End Road.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE CONVERSION OF CHILDREN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING APRIL 30th, 1871, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs."
MATTHEW xv—26.

OUR Lord had but recently left the land of Gennesaret and come into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon when he uttered the words we have selected as our text for this evening's discourse. The incident that gave rise to them is well known, but not better known than loved; there are such sweet touches of nature and grace in it that the charm of the narrative never suffers by oft repetition, but seems rather to unfold fresh beauties every time. In a humble home upon the coast of that region there was "a skeleton." Alas! where shall we find the home that has none? Is there one represented here this evening but what has its own secret sorrow and subject of constant grief? "The skeleton" of this abode was a daughter possessed with a devil. She whose birth was hailed with joy, and whose companionship in years to come, was anticipated by the mother with delight, now proves the sorrow of the home. Maddened by the devil, the child was the anguish not the solace of her mother's heart. One day the news reached the darkened home that Jesus was wending his way towards that region. Hope for the first time shot a gleam of light through the thick gloom. The fame of Jesus had gone before Him, and His power to cast out devils had often been the theme of wondering gossip. The mother argued "if He be able to cast out devils, why not my daughter's?" The thought was quite enough to wing her feet with speed. At once she sets off, and journeys to meet the Saviour. O, who can fathom the deeps of her heart's desire, as coming near Him, she breaks out in that piteous cry "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David." Mark how the *mother* manifests itself in that brief prayer. She makes it a personal matter, "have mercy on *me*." Tell her "poor woman, you have made a mistake, it is not you, but your daughter who wants the mercy," and she will answer "we are one, we are one, if mercy comes to her it comes to me." Again and again did that mother, as she followed in the track of Jesus, repeat with ever growing earnestness her simple prayer. Jesus was her only hope. Did she not succeed with Him, she must return to the darkness of her home, only made deeper by the transient ray of hope, "Mercy—mercy—mercy" she cries in tones that tell of concentrated agony. The disciples who were not usually the most tender-hearted, were unable to resist the pathos of the appeal,

but Jesus, the ever loving, answered her not a word. Strange silence!! What can be its meaning? Moved by compassion, the disciples venture to plead her cause; inspired by her earnestness, they "besought Him," saying "send her away, for she crieth after us." Less than justice is often done the disciples here. They are represented as objecting to the crying of the woman, and asking Christ to use His authority to tell her to depart. That this was not the case is proved in a moment by our Lord's answer, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." They interceded for her, and asked she might be sent home with her desire granted. Christ reminds them that the object of His mission was the house of Israel, not the gentile world to which the woman belonged. This answer is a worse rebuff than His previous silence. It seems to shut the door in the face of all hope. What effect has it it on the suppliant mother? The very reverse of what we should have anticipated. "Then"—on hearing this answer—"came she and worshipped Him, saying "Lord, help me." The apparent denial of the disciples' request only increases her boldness; she comes nearer to Him than ever she had ventured before, and still pleads her case. Wondrous importunity!! But her faith is now to receive a severer trial than any preceding one. The answer of our Saviour was sufficient to have dashed the hopes and stayed the pleadings of any less resolute and believing soul. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." "Dog" she might well have said, "He called me dog, then farewell hope." But no! Rising, or rather stooping to the exigency of the case, she turns the rebuke into an argument. "Truth Lord, I accept the description and claim the dog's privilege, for they "eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." It was enough. The grand faith the Saviour saw she had, was demonstrated. Now comes her reward. "O, woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee as thou wilt, and her daughter was made whole from that very hour." I have thus tried very briefly to show the surroundings of our text. I desire now to take it apart from its connexion. There can be no doubt that children's bread should *not* be cast to the dogs, and in all probability the Lord quoted a well known proverb. It was evidently understood and acquiesced in by the woman. Leaving aside the beautiful settings of the text, and taking it as a truth by itself, I shall try and plead the children's cause, and first I shall show that *in spreading the table, the children are not to be forgotten*; and secondly that *care must be taken that what is placed upon the table is suitable for children*, or in other words, "children's bread."

I. IN SPREADING THE TABLE, CHILDREN ARE NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN. By bread is unquestionably meant the means of grace. "These," says our Saviour, "were specially provided for the house of Israel rather than the gentile world. Taking the word in this sense, you will at once see the duty I am anxious about pressing home this evening. It is making special preparation or employing every means for the conversion of children. Whilst the adult masses have brought to bear upon them all the means the church can command, the children are not to be forgotten, but are also to have their share. This I venture to say is dreadfully overlooked; little is comparatively

done for the *conversion* of children as such. How is this? What is the cause for this strange omission, an omission which can hardly be denied by any careful observer? I think it is to be found in the fact that *the church of God has a strange unbelief in the possibility of children being converted in their early days.* The period when saving grace may be expected to work upon the soul is postponed by too many until the attainment of adult years. It is inwardly believed if not outwardly expressed that the plastic nature of childhood must become hardened as a nether millstone, and that fair innocent life be dragged through the muck and mire of adult sins before it becomes a fit subject for the Holy Spirit to work upon. This error is, I believe, far more widely spread than most imagine. That children's conversion is not much expected, I shall attempt to prove by three things—first, it is discoverable in *the kind of teaching they too often receive.* Children are generally brought beneath the flashing lightning of Sinai, instead of the milder beams of Calvary. Their salvation one might often imagine was one of works rather than grace. Whilst the sinner of riper years is pointed to the gloriously finished work of Christ and told that no righteousness of his own can be of any avail, the child is told "he must be good—obey his teachers—love his parents, in fact fulfil the law and virtually attempt to work out a righteousness of his own." He is believed to be capable of understanding moral precepts, but not yet qualified for receiving spiritual truth. What is the qualification needed? Is it to wait until the world and sin have armed the soul with a coat of mail—until it has become initiated in the grosser sins of youth—until the naturally trustful disposition of the child has changed into the scepticism of manhood? Strange preparation!!! I am convinced that no missionary-society for the heathen would receive the support of the christian public for one year if their agents taught heathendom as childhood is often instructed in our schools. The conversion of a heathen is more believed in, and therefore more directly sought, than the conversion of a child of a thousand prayers.

Secondly, another argument to prove my case is found in *the subject being so ignored at our public Sunday-school-meetings.* What forms the staple subject of half the addresses you hear at these gatherings? Almost everything except the conversion of the children. That which generally takes the precedence of all else is the average attendance of children and teachers in the morning and afternoon. This average is usually carried out to a fractional or decimal nicety. We are told so many children and part of a child, so many teachers and fraction of a teacher have been found in their places during the year. David numbering the people was never half so minute in his calculations. After this you are almost certain to hear an oration about "the pernicious influence of the literature of the present day," or "the effect of the educational act upon our Sunday schools," or "the necessity of improved ventilation in our schoolrooms." When these subjects have been duly elaborated, then, if there be time, the last ten minutes when every body is moving are devoted to "the importance of seeking the early conversion of children." This is I am certain no overdrawn picture of many a Sabbath school meeting. At one at

which I was present over one hour and a half was devoted to these subjects. During the whole of this time the subject of conversion was never once mentioned. Many of our public meetings, if they proclaim anything, proclaim that conversion is looked upon as one of the "extras" of Sunday school instruction. May God hasten the time when in this respect "the first shall be last, and the last first."

Thirdly, another argument to prove my point is found in *the amount of suspicion in which young candidates for church fellowship are held.* There are many dear old saints of God who seem to have a wonderful horror of any church receiving in a large number of young persons. It is not, they imagine, a "solid" increase, whatever that may mean. Whenever they speak of them it is always with a devout hope that they may turn out to be genuine. On the ground of their childhood they are examined and cross-examined as few adults would endure. Test after test is applied as if the conversion of the child was so strange a phenomenon that it could only be admitted after evidence of more than ordinary worth. The child must be sound as a bell in doctrine, have all the five points at the end of its little fingers, and start in its life as a church member with an experience as rich and deep as a christian's of half a century's standing. I am certain I am not going beyond the bounds of truth when I assert that a higher morality and consistency is demanded from the youthful candidate for church fellowship than is to be found in the lives of many of the adult members. Instead of being ever on the look out to welcome with joy the children professors, there are many who seem to think it their special duty to put as many barriers in their way as possible, and then only receive them in under protest or with an apology. If some hoary headed old drunkard come forward and declare himself on the Lord's side, his conversion is more believed in, and he is more readily received into communion than the little child, who from its birth, has been the subject of thousands of earnest prayers. It is a sad but indisputable fact that many churches are almost looked down upon and sneered at, because they consist, as these wise ones say "of only a lot of young people." Many of our churches have yet to learn that like their Master it is for them with open arms to say "suffer the little children to come unto me."

Having thus noticed this strange unbelief in the conversion of children, I shall try and show its wickedness and folly, and in order to do so I would remark first, that *there is nothing in the word of God calculated to foster the error.* In our ignorance we often point the child to the man, and make the latter the model for the former, in scripture it is the very reverse. I never read of Jesus taking an adult and placing him in the midst of a group of children, saying "there my dear children, when you grow up to his size and become like him you may hope to enter into my kingdom." No, I neither read that or anything like it, but I think I have read that once our Saviour gathered his disciples together after they had been quarrelling with all the wisdom of adult saints as to who among them should be the greatest, and putting the little child in the middle of the jealous group, said "except ye be converted, and become as *little children* ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble

himself as *this* little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." In the present day we point the child to the man, but in the days of our Lord He pointed the man to the child. We want to have the children more like men. Our Saviour wanted to have the men more like children. If the book teaches anything clearly, it teaches that children treated Jesus far better than adults. The only one triumphant procession our Lord ever had was chiefly through the little ones. As He rides meek and lowly, upon an ass, the Scribes and Pharisees scowl and frown upon Him. The intellect and manhood of the age sneered at the Nazarine and refused Him homage. But in spite of all, our Saviour had His ovation. From whom? Why, from the children. They were better than their fathers and wiser than their teachers. They lined the road, they followed His course, making all the hills ring again with their joyous shouts. They press after Him into the temple, and never did that place—changed by adults into a den of thieves—echo with notes of truer worship, that when their childish voices shouted "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna, to the son of David." Of course the sanctimonious hypocrites were greatly shocked and sorely displeased, so turning to the Master, they said "hearest thou what these say?" Yes, of course He did. His ears had been drinking in with pleasure their simple praises, and He means that they shall know it too. Listen to His answer to the children despisers, "Yea, have ye never read, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." Standing out in bright relief to the general contempt with which our Saviour was treated is His reception by the children,

That children are not overlooked or forgotten in heaven is clearly taught by the words of our Lord recorded in the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew, and the tenth verse. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Our Lord had just pointed the man to the child, and now he contrasts heaven's interest in children to earth's. He seems to say "You think but little of the child I have just placed in your midst, and are ready to despise and scorn him for his childhood's sake. If *you* do, remember *heaven* does not. The little ones have their guardian angels and ministering spirits as well as adults. Those bright spirits despise not their tiny charges, nor are they considered as being employed in a meaner work than those who track the steps of the saint with silver locks. Turn not away from children, and count them but of little worth, they are equally watched over on earth and represented in heaven as yourselves." Wherever else children may be slighted and young believers snubbed, they are not in the pages of The Book. *That* reserves some of its sweetest portions for its little readers.

Remember also that *there is nothing whatsoever in the nature of conversion to make a child's improbable, or sanction infidelity about its genuineness.* The general objection is that "they are not old enough to make up their minds yet." Strange objection this, and one which shows that he who raises it knows but very little about what conversion is. I never knew an adult yet who was old enough to make up his mind to come to Christ. If conversion be the result of maturity of thought then the objection may hold good, but if it be the direct work

of the Holy Spirit upon the heart the objection falls to the ground at once. Why not a child's heart as well as a man's? Conversion is no mere intellectual triumph, no result of a strong mental effort. It is a complete change in affections, mind, and life, and this change by regeneration through the Holy Ghost. So far from "old enough to make up your mind" being any help in conversion, it is very often the greatest difficulty in the way of obtaining peace. The scripture says "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," and it is the head that more often perplexes the heart than helps it. Have we not all during our christian life come across keen, sharp, clever men, groping their way in spiritual things, but failing to find immediate peace because they were too proud of their intellectual wealth to drop reason and believe with a child's faith. Certainly we have. The world by its own wisdom never has and never will find out God. The most highly cultured is as dependent upon the revealings of the Spirit as the most unlettered and ignorant.

Do you see, dear friends, the bearing of this fact upon our subject? If conversion be no triumph of the head, but a simple change of the heart, childhood can prove no obstacle. Yea, if anything, it is a help rather than a hindrance. If there is not more to be done in a child than an adult there is less to be *un*done. In both cases a new building has to be reared from its foundation, but there is less rubbish to be removed in the one instance than the other. The child's heart is clear of the sophistries which an unsanctified intellect has weaved about the man's. So long as conversion consists in becoming "as a little child" there can be nothing in its nature to militate against the conversion of children. It rather places them on a vantage ground.

Bear in mind, moreover, that whatever is the nature of conversion it is *entirely of the Holy Spirit.* I have already rather anticipated myself in the previous argument, but there is a difference between the two. That was that there was nothing in conversion itself that childhood might not have. This goes further. It touches the author of that conversion. I think there are not likely to be found here any who deny that regeneration is the work of the Holy Ghost, and His work alone. If there are we have nothing to do with them this evening We are speaking to those who hold that the blessed work of the third person of the Trinity is as necesssary as the work of the Father or the Son. Now granting that all conversion is of the Spirit, why should not children be converted? May not He who works in such a diversity of ways choose also to work on a diversity of ages? *When once you lift conversion out of the realm of man into that of God, all difficulties disappear.* None can be too old for Him, none too young. The same Spirit that uproots with awful might the gnarled old oak tree of half a century's growth, can bend for His purposes the tenderest shoot that buds in spring. Let us be encouraged, then, to work for children's souls, seeing that there is nothing either in conversion's nature or conversion's author to exclude the little ones from being saved.

Lastly on this point, *there is nothing in the lives of professedly christian children to warrant unbelief in childhood's conversion.* If you want specimens of coldness, prayerlessness, worldliness and selfishness, you must not go to a youthful band of christians to find them. They

seem to be the unhappy distinctions of adult years. Fearless of contradiction, I assert that those who have ever had much to do with work among children have found a piety in the little ones that puts to the blush many of us who are older. Their devotion and love to the Saviour is as marked as it is beautiful. The young tree often has most fruit upon its boughs. Would to God many of our members could keep their youthful piety, for it was brighter far than what they now have. Like Israel they have declined, and there is need to "cry in their ears, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, *the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals*, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." This truth receives sad confirmation from the many prayers we hear for "the return of our first love." Children piety is no inferior kind, but will bear comparison with any. Too often it is higher in its infancy than its manhood.

"But Christian children are children still." True, and so Christian men are men still. It is no more inconsistent for Christian children to play than it is for Christian men to work. The one is as natural and proper for childhood as the other is for manhood. It would be absurd to unchristianize a man because all the week he works hard, and it is *as* absurd to call in question a child's piety because he plays. Suppose he does still love to bowl his hoop. Is that a crime? I would that no greater were ever done. Suppose the skipping rope yet possesses a charm. Is that opposed to Christianity? No, let the children play. Grace can shine as much in a child's game as in a man's toil. Conversion sanctifies, not eradicates the child. There is one proof of the genuineness of child conversion must be stated, and I hope those who are so fearful of their coming into church-fellowship will remember it. *Children are not the ones who bring sorrow to the Church.* In nine cases out of ten, church discipline is not upon children members, but adults. It has been so with us here, and most remarkable is the testimony given by the pastor of the largest church in the world. Mr. Spurgeon, said some years ago, "I have, during the past year, baptized as many as forty or fifty children, and of all those with whom I have talked on the subject of their conversion, I have never proposed any for church-fellowship with greater satisfaction than I have done these little ones. Amongst those I have had at any time to exclude from church fellowship, out of a church of two thousand, seven hundred members, *I have never had to exclude one who was received into the church while yet a child.*"

Away then with the idea that a converted child is a kind of *rara avis*, only to be met with once or twice in a life time. Children can be converted *as* children, and this fact should lead the church to make direct and special efforts on their behalf. Let not child's bread be forgotten or cast to the dogs as if of little value. I have but a moment or two left for my second point. I can but give you the outline and leave to your own meditation the filling up of details.

II. CARE MUST BE TAKEN THAT WHAT IS PLACED UPON THE TABLE IS CHILDRENS' BREAD. There must be suitability in food provided for chilren. There must be the same in the means of grace employed on their behalf. It would be ridiculous to take a little one to a Mansion House banquet. In all probability it would be overlooked

and have nothing handed to it, and if bold enough to help itself, most likely the result would be illness. The strong meats and delicacies were not intended for childhood. Equally foolish is it to have but one service for adults and children. I rejoice that the old plan of packing the poor little things up in the darkest part of the gallery during the service time is fast passing away, and that the church begins to see the necessity for providing special services for the children. Whilst in the sanctuary there should be a banquet of "fat things full of marrow," there should also at the same time be in the school room a simple spread of "children's bread."

"Childrens' bread," yes! *not loaf.* What they have given them should be ready cut and broken up. It were simple cruelty to put a loaf before a child and tell him to cut for himself—most likely he would cut himself instead. So is it equally foolish and wrong to give little ones God's truth in the loaf, and leave it to them to divide it. They are not to be expected to "divide arightly," and no wonder if in their efforts to do so they suffer some harm, the scar of which may be carried for years. "Children's bread," not *crust.* That the softest part of bread was intended by the Lord is certain. It was bread that would break up in crumbs. In Mark's accounts of this same narrative the woman is represented as pleading her right to the children's crumbs. It was bread so soft that their little fingers could crumble it up. See to it, ye workers among children, that what you give them is soft and easy for the mouth. Don't let them break their little teeth, now over what in years to come will be a delight. Forcing it to soon upon them may create a prejudice that would never otherwise have existed. And now to conclude—O, fathers—mothers—teachers—friends—up, and to the work of winning children's souls. Believe that as children they may become converted, and aim at nothing lower in your teaching. Go not to the work without the expectation of seeing present results. Think not that weary years must pass before you are privileged to reap a sheaf. Scatter not the seed with faint hope, that only after many days it shall be seen. Sow with one hand and expect to reap with the other. Children *can* be converted—children *can* live in Christ and children *can* die in Christ, with as sweet assurance and complete a triumph as the most aged saint of God. Labor then for these precious little souls. Employ every means to bring them to the arms of Jesus. Despise not the humblest instrumentality, nor throw to the dogs a single child's crumb. Work while their hearts are tender. Plead with them whilst they are young.

"Gather the rosebuds while ye may,
Old time is still a-flying;
And that same flower that blooms to-day,
To-morrow may be dying."

Scripture Read—Matthew XVIII.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book.—214—639—1028.

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CHURCH UNITY.

(An Exposition of Psalm cxxxiii.*)*

DELIVERED LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 11TH, 1871, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard,
even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;
As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of
Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

PSALM CXXXIII.

SHORT though this psalm is, it were difficult to find a sweeter. Every sentence breathes peace, and the whole is fragrant with love. It is precious as the ointment of which it speaks, and refreshing as the dew on Hermon's hill. To take any one part away from the whole is an impossibity. The charm of every portion is heightened by its relationship to the remainder. It is difficult to speak with certainty as to the cause of its composition Different circumstances are given by various writers as the probable motives that led to its penmanship. Some link it with the period of David's call to the throne, and imagine it was suggested by all the tribes of Israel coming unto him at Hebron and saying, "Behold we are thy bone and thy flesh," and then and there anointing him king. It may be so. It is not improbable that the anointing oil then poured upon his head gave rise to the beautiful illustration of the second verse, although Aaron's head and not his own is mentioned. Others trace its inspiration to a later time, when after having been obliged to flee the land through the insurrection of Absalom, the people were at strife through all the tribes of Israel as to which should first speak a word of bringing the king back, and when from every quarter there came the cry, "Return!" It is immaterial, however, to us this morning when or why this psalm was written. That it is written is a blessed fact. May its blessing be ours. It may well be applied to any community, family or church that is found abiding in peace. Dr. DELANY, looking upon this psalm as having a political bearing, says, "Unity beginning in the prince and diffused through the people is here illustrated by two images, the most apt and beautiful that ever were imagined. Kingdoms are considered as bodies politic, of which the king is the head, and the people in their several ranks and orders the parts and members. A spirit of union beginning upon the prince is like oil poured upon the head of Aaron, which naturally descends and spreads itself over all the parts of the body, and diffuses beauty and fragrance over the whole, reaching even to the skirts of the garment. Oil is without question the finest emblem of union that ever was conceived. It is a substance consisting of very small parts, which yet, by their mutual adhesion, constitute one uniform, well united, and useful body. The next image carries the exhortation to union, and the

advantages of it still higher. Hermon was the general name of one mountain comprising many lesser and lower hills under the summit of a greater. Union in any nation is the gift of God; and therefore unity among brethren, beginning from the king, is like the dew of heaven, which falling first upon the highest summit, descends to the lower and thence even to the humble valleys." These words are true. The strength and health of a nation lie in the nation's unity. Well had it been for poor France, now rent and bleeding through accursed civil war, if she had known in her experience the teaching of this psalm —if from the throne to the peasantry there had been found the oil and the dew of unity. Let England also learn the lesson. She will only hold her high position and remain a power for good so long as all classes of her community are cemented together in the bonds of national brotherhood. Let the anointing oil, and refreshing dew of Hermon be wanting, and the strongest nation will fall to pieces before the feeblest blow. Thus much for the political bearing of the psalm. It is not the view we intend taking of it this morning. The divine imagery of its verses receives an additional beauty by being looked upon as the representation of spiritual unity in the church. Heavenly love is the oil of gladness and dew of Hermon, which being poured upon the head of Jesus without measure, flows down from Him upon his followers, who are but the skirts of His garment. May the Lord graciously throw a flood of light upon this psalm, as together we muse upon its verses. We will have three divisions under which I think the whole will be included. First, *the grace;* that is unity. Secondly, *its illustrations;* the oil and the dew. Thirdly, *its benefit;* "there the Lord commanded the blessing."

I. THE GRACE. "What is here meant by brethren dwelling together in unity?" This is the question that is doubtless being asked by many hearts. Before giving the direct and positive answer, I will give you the negative, and show you what it is *not*. This is necessary in order to meet some general mistakes. Notice then first *that it is no mere absence of quarrelling*. Something far higher is intended. The two are not in any way identical, although sometimes confounded. Living in unity will truly prevent the quarrel, but the mere absence of the quarrel in no wise proves the presence of true unity. The former includes the latter, but the latter does not necessarily imply the former. Let me show you more clearly what I mean by an illustration. In yonder graveyard all classes of society are buried During life they held the most opposite views, and bitter were the party strifes that raged. There are represented there all the shades of political opinion and all kinds of religious and irreligious belief. Men by nature, education and circumstances, the very contrasts to each other lie side by side, but I hear no words of strife. The Tory reposes next the Liberal without any denunciation against his neighbour. The Churchman lies next the subscriber to the Liberation Society, and yet expresses no horror at the company he is in. Men too, who all their lives had fought over some law-suit, and managed to beggar each other, now rest in contiguous graves without a word of angry reproach. Stand in that grave yard all day and night, and you will hear no discordant sound, no words of strife. The birds sing in the branches and the owl flits among the tombstones, when the evening comes, but there is no

quarrelling among its inhabitants. True!—But there is likewise no dwelling together in unity. The quiet is the quiet of death, not the love and affection of life. Yet again. As you ascend the Great St. Bernard, you come to the convent founded in the year 968. It is situated in the snow region, and every afternoon, from November to May, some of the monks go forth, with their trusty dogs, to search for any travellers that may have lost their way in the trackless wastes. Many a life has thus been saved, but sometimes the succour comes too late, and only a frozen corpse rewards them for their toil. This corpse is placed in the dead house attached to the hospice. There are many in it. Frozen stiff and hard they stand upon their feet against the wall; their bodies shrouded in drapery, but their faces visible. Some of them have been there for years, awaiting some friend to recognise and claim them. Enter that dead house as the pale moonbeams gleam through the grated window, and fall on the sheeted dead. There is no discord there. Never has an angry word fallen from the lip of any of those ghastly figures since the monks placed them in position. There are no quarrels in the dead house on St. Bernard. Quite true; and equally so is it that there is no dwelling together in unity. They are too frozen and dead to fall out. *It is the cold, not Christ, that keeps the silence.* So it is with many churches. There are no particular discords—no angry meetings—no violent quarrels—and yet there is no unity. They are too frozen up by their respectability to show temper. Politeness, if not godliness, keeps them from contentions; besides which, as no one knows anybody else, it is rather a difficult matter to have a difference, as self is the last person one is likely to fall out with. The church consists of so many distinct and frozen particles—one pewful knowing nothing of those before or behind, and not wishing to increase its knowledge. Now grant that in such a church there has been no quarrel known for years, can we apply this psalm to them and say, "Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity?" It would be irony to do so. We might if the text spoke of the blessedness of being frozen together. No! the quiet is that of indifference—the calm that of the icy region—the absence of quarrelling simply the result of the presence of death. The text means something more than this. Secondly, *it is not dwelling apart in order to have peace.* Living asunder is sometimes the only expedient in order to avoid a collision, Early as the days of Abraham it was resorted to. His herdmen and Lot's, being unable to agree, he proposed that one should journey one way, and one the other, and so avoid all strife. This is better than contention, but it is something infinitely below dwelling together in unity. It is peace at the cost of dwelling together, not in it. It is unity at the sacrifice of union, if such a thing be possible. Of all modes of obtaining peace, this is certainly the most humiliating. It is a confession that dwelling *together* in unity is an impossibility. The chemist has in his possession two explosive compounds: kept apart they are comparatively harmless, brought together they would annihilate the premises. How carefully are they secured in different receptacles. The plan answers, and for years their destructive powers lie dormant. You cannot say, concerning them, "how good it is to see them thus dwelling together in unity." The peace and safety arises from the fact that they are *not* together.

O, do not dear friends run away with the idea that because you never speak or associate with this or that person for fear of a difference between you, that therefore you come under the benediction of this psalm. The grace spoken of here is dwelling together in unity, not apart. Yet once again, the unity spoken of here is something more than *beinig members of the same church, or being engaged in the same wrok.*

We have already attempted to show that it does not consist in frequenting the same sanctuary, we have now with sorrow to add that neither does it necessarily exist among fellow church-members. The names may appear side by side in the church book, whilst the hearts of those two are far apart. Did fellow-membership always mean dwelling together in unity, then "church meetings" would be far happier gatherings than some unfortunate pastors find them. There may be unity in doctrine and ordinance, and yet little in spirit. But closer even than fellow-membership, is fellow-work, and yet this does not always mean what the first verse of this psalm describes. You may be one of a band of sunday school teachers—one of a number of tract distributors, and yet not dwell in unity with the teacher who takes the next class, or the brother who visits the other side of the same street. No merely external relationship can guarantee the blessed unity described by the oil and the dew. What is it then? It is for *any number to be as if one soul actuated them all.* The very wording of the verse shows it is for the plural to dwell in the singular —the many to make but one. A better illustration of this cannot be found than that which suggested itself, or rather was suggested, to the mind of Paul. The human body composed of many members, yet constituting but one man. One soul in many members—one life, the life of all. Every muscle obeying one will. The hand—the foot—the eye, all living by the same life current—all giving willing obedience to the same soul. This is dwelling together in unity. O happy, happy church, where one motive inspires all, and that the glory of Jesus— where every member is knit to every other by loving life and living love—where, however numerous the fellowship may be, only one heart—a great heart beats and sends the warm life stream leaping through every artery to every member.

To dwell together in unity is to *serve the Lord with one consent.*

In the previous division we were speaking of the unity of life, in this we have the outward manifestation of that life—unity in work. When the church of God goes forth to war as *one*—when in every regiment it walks shoulder to to shoulder. O how glorious a sight it is to see the church militant thus sweep past to the battle field. What music is equal to that "left—right, left—right," that makes the ground tremble under foot. How grand the spectacle, when under one banner and shouting the name of one leader, Jehovah Jesus, the church marches on. No laggard—no craven hearted one—no traitors. It were worth forfeiting five years of life to see such a sight as this. Once more. It includes *serving each other in love.* This is distinct from the other two. The first was the life of unity, the second its manifestation in work, this its manifestation in sympathy to each other. Whilst fighting the foe with one hand, to be helping our comrade with

the other—in the long marches giving our arm to the one who is ready to sink with weariness—carrying the knapsack of the tired soldier, and so fulfilling the law of Christ—raising him who, tripped up by some stone in the path, has fallen—after battle giving drink to the wounded on the field. Yes, dwelling together in unity includes all these and many other things we have not time to mention. It gleams forth in the eye, it is seen in the hand, and makes itself evident in ten-thousand little acts of kindness. This unity will have to be *continually cemented by forgiveness*. Whilst mortal and not half-sanctified, offences will come, but they need not remain. Yea, just as some cements make the broken place stronger than before, so forgiveness increases not deteriorates the strength of unity. "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted," there is the unity. "Forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." There you have the cement to bind it together again when broken.

Let us now consider the high encomium passed upon this grace by the psalmist; it is good and pleasant. This he introduces by a "Behold." The language seems to imply that it is impossible to say "how" good or how pleasant it is, but that so good and pleasant it is, that wherever it exists it deserves and calls for special notice. There are but few things about which both of these words can be employed. The two rarely go together. Many things are good which are the very reverse of pleasant, and a multitude of things are very pleasant but a long way off from being good. Behold then how worthy an object of admiration that must be, that is as good as it is pleasant, and not more pleasant than it is good. Both words are equally truthful in the description of unity. First. *It is good.* That it is so, may be proved by many an argument. We will but select three or four. It is good because of its being *in accordance with the will and nature of God.* God is love. There you have His nature. That we should be conformed to His image. There you have His will. Now that which brings my spirit and life into harmony with my God's, must be of necessity passing good. An unloving heart is opposed to all that is revealed of God. A spirit that knows but little compassion, and lives in selfish isolation, can never be in harmony with Him "who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The sower of strife can never live in sympathy with Him whose whole gospel is one of "reconciliation." But this blessed unity about which we have been speaking breathes forth an atmosphere of compassion, and knows nothing of isolation; it rejoices in the habitable part of the earth, and its delights are with the sons of men. Strife it never sows, but seeks to uproot the hateful weed wherever found. It must be good, for it is of God, and like God, and brings into fellowship with God, for "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." It is good for it is *obedience to the new command of Christ.* The natural man knows but ten commandments, the spiritual knows eleven, and that last extra one embraces all the rest. "A new commandment give I unto you," says our Lord, "that ye love one another." O how good must that be which Jesus makes the subject of such a commandment! Unity and love among His disciples seemed ever the great desire of our Master's heart; it formed the chief petition of that which is most

truly "The Lord's prayer." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." Unity among brethren has been stamped by our Saviour as "very good." Its goodness is also seen in *the fact of it being one of the chief evidences of discipleship.* In proportion as anything is of value, so the proofs of our possession increase in value. Nothing can compete in worth with being one of the Lord's disciples; how good therefore must that be that sets beyond a doubt the fact of our discipleship. Let me refer you now to one passage of scripture that explains the argument, you will find it in the First Epistle of John, the third chapter, and the fourteenth verse, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, *because we love the brethren,*" Here is the grand proof of the possession of spiritual life. Not that we preach, or teach, or give, but that we love. A man may be sound as Calvin, and as eloquent as a Whitefield, and yet lack the one thing that proves him to be a child of God. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God," whatever his profession or pretentions may be. Good indeed must be that sweet unity that stamps professions as "genuine." Lastly, that must be good that *makes the communion of saints good and edifying.* It is dwelling in love with the saint as well as the Saviour that qualifies the soul to enjoy the sweets of fellowship. If you are indeed a child of God, then I defy you to find any real enjoyment at the Lord's table whilst you are living at variance with a brother in Jesus. The dew of refreshing will not rest upon an angry spirit, it is too hot and dries the heavenly moisture up. Services, prayer meetings, reading of the word, all these lose their sweetness and charm when unity is wanting. If it gives not the blessing, it gives a preparedness of soul to receive it. By precious enjoyments when we have had it, and by better memories of when we lacked it, our own experience adds "it is good." Secondly, *it is pleasant.* On this point we will not dwell as time forbids, suffice it to say, it is pleasant to God and to Christ; it is pleasant to angels and to saints; it is pleasant to pastors and to the world. On this last I must just say, that from the deepest depths of my heart I pity the man who is pastor of any church where it is found wanting. Dreary and heart-breaking must be the work of laboring amongst a divided people. With but little expectation of any blessing can he preach the word, and no wonder if his hands hang down and his spirit bleeds. But how pleasant, beyond expression, the joy of laboring for souls amidst a church whose life is a living commentary on this psalm. Heaven and earth, Christ and His people, together sing "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

II. THE ILLUSTRATIONS. The psalmist having made the statement upon which we have thus far been meditating, now enforces it by two of the most beautiful illustrations that can be imagined. They are so full of true poetry beside being thoroughly Eastern that I almost fear anything I can say upon them will but mar their beauty and weaken their force. They commend themselves at once to the mind. One *feels* their suitability as emblems the moment read. For two or three minutes let us dwell upon the first employed. Unity among brethren is like *the anointing oil upon Aaron's head.* In order fully to

understand the allusion, I must ask you to refer to Exodus xxx, 23 to 25. "Moreover the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take thou also unto thee principal spices of pure myrrh five hundred shekels. and of sweet cinnamon half as much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred shekels, and of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil an hin; and thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary; it shall be an holy anointing oil." You will see from this that the ointment was made up of *several different compounds, all precious in themselves.* Myrrh, cinnamon, cassia, olive, all these lend their own sweetness to make the one fragrance of the anointing oil. So the sweet blessing of unity consists not in any one ingredient, but in the blending together of many. Various are the spices, all "principal" in themselves, that make the ointment of unity. There must be the myrrh of love. This takes the precedence. Full measure of this must be found. Whatever other spice may be given by the two hundred and fifty shekels, of this there must be five hundred. The shekels must not be of this world, which are always light, but of the sanctuary. Without love the ointment can never be made, it is the principal of all "the principal spices." With this there must also be the sweet cinnamon of gentleness, the sweet calamus of meekness, the cassia of longsuffering. and the olive oil of forgiveness. These all mixed in their respective quantities—a good measure of each—will make an ointment more precious even than that which flowed down Aaron's beard. The anointing oil was also *most fragrant.* How could it be otherwise? When so many odours blend, the whole must be full of scent. There was no need to be told that Aaron's head was anointed. The ointment made its own presence known. So with unity. There is cause to suspect its absence when it is much advertised. Unity is so fragrant that it can never keep its secret. Not only is it sweet itself, but it perfumes all it touches. Things most distateful in themselves become fragrant through its influence. Rebukes and reproofs lose all their harshness when anointed with this oil Yea, they even became pleasant and refreshing. David thought so when he said "let the righteous smite me: it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me: it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." Yet again, *Aaron was not qualified to minister until he had been anointed with this ointment.* You will read in Exodus xxx, 30, "and thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office." Whatever other qualifications he might possess the lack of this would be an insuperable barrier in the way of his ministrations. So with us. No soul wanting the anointing oil of love is meet for the Master's use. No eloquence, no ability can take its place. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal and though, I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Where is the blessed unction to be obtained? Only from Christ. We, who are but as the skirts of His garments, can only receive as it flows down from Him who is our Head.

Secondly, it is compared to the *dew of Hermon*. It is my purpose on this point only to indicate in general one or two resemblances, and leave to your own meditations the filling in of detail. *It comes from above.* Fogs and mists come from the earth, we always speak of them as "rising." Concerning the dew, we say "it falls." Evil passions and all that obscures comes from the evil of our own hearts; they rise. The heavenly spirit of love—the soul's dew, descends. James in his epistle, very beautifully distinguishes between the two, he says "if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is *earthly, sensual, devilish.* But the wisdom that is *from above* is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." Dew *cools the air and makes fruitfulness abound.* The spirit of loving unity calms the heated passions and gives birth to fruit, as James beautifully adds to the verse just quoted, "and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. Dew *waiteth not for men.* Micah speaks of it in his prophecies as the "dew from the Lord, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." Dew comes without being asked for. That is a poor kind of love that needs much pleading to bring it forth. The highest kind is that which *will* fall, and nothing hinder, coming like the dew upon the unkind and thankless. O marvellous grace that requires two such matchless illustrations to describe its beauty and its worth.

III. Its Benefit. "There the Lord commanded the blessing." Much might be said under this division of the psalm, but time forbids. How precious is that word "commanded"! How full of comfort! Not for us is it to command a blessing, we can but beg for it. "Let the blessing come" is our cry. "The Lord commands the blessing" is heaven's answer. But where is the happy spot on which a commanded blessing rests like dew? I answer, the spot where unity abounds. Alas, how many a church has had all its prosperity blasted by internal strife and envy. Splits and divisions and anger have turned many gardens of the Lord into howling wildernesses. But where love reigns—where the holy oil anoints pastor and people alike —where the sweeter dew than Hermon's falls, there in spite of every opposition, the blessing comes, because it is "commanded." The Lord who has so graciously given it unto as a church and people, long continue it. May the oil never cease to flow, and may this Hermon never lack its dew. O may the day soon come when everywhere enmity shall cease, and love reign universally—when all God's children of every tribe shall be bound together in one bond of sacred and eternal love. Beloved, the day breaks apace, when all the shadows of the church shall flee away, and when saints and angels shall sing together this lovely psalm in glory land, God grant we may be there to swell the song. Amen.

Scripture Read—Ephesians IV.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—146, Part II—888—133.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? MICAH vii—18.

No God like Israel's God—this was the joyous boast of patriarch psalmist and all the prophets. Not only was it rung into the ears of the chosen people, that the "Lord thy God is one Lord," but that their God was incomparable in Himself and all His actions. With what triumphant joy does Moses utter his song and extol his God before the assembled congregation of Israel. How defiant does the song become, as glorying in his ROCK, he challenges all others to show its equal, and exclaims "their rock is not as our ROCK, even our enemies themselves being judges." Well did Elijah, that prophet of fire, maintain the same when on Carmel's mount he dared all the prophets of Baal to the test; when before an assembled host he vindicated the honour of his God, and made the conscience-stricken crowd declare "the Lord, He is the God—the Lord, He is the God." The psalmist bids his harp sound forth the same bold strain, as he sings "wherefore should the heathen say, where is now their God? And then lashing their idols with bitter sarcasm, continues, "they have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusteth in them." Grandly does Jehovah throw down the gauntlet through His servant Isaiah, and challenge all comparison. "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One, "thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his redeemer, the Lord of hosts. I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not of any." God laughs to scorn all rivals. Idols, the work of men's hands, He spurneth. Jehovah shareth not His glories with another. Alone He is God, and incomparable are all His actions. It is happy work to boast in the Lord. Good is it for the soul to get out of itself its petty cares and trials, and revel in what its God is. This holy boasting is an atmosphere that strengthens while it rests—it prepares the heart to endure suffering with patience, and makes it bold for any enterprise. He who has a little God will always be a small saint; but in proportion as we understand the grandeur of our

God, will our spiritual manhood grow strong. Everything about our God is great and worthy of Himself. Every attribute is that attribute in fullest perfection. Everything our God does is done in a God-like manner. All He is—all He has—all He does, is beyond compare. Is he wise? Yea, He is the "only wise God." Is He potent? Yea, something more, for "the Lord God *omni*potent reigneth." Is He holy? Yea, the Holy One—Him before whom the angels veil their faces and cry, "Holy—Holy—HOLY." Thrice must the word be repeated to set forth the holiness of Him they praise. When His mercy is the theme, the holy writers seem as if they felt all language far too poor to describe its matchless worth, and so they heap words upon words, and thus in every verse of a whole psalm it is declared that "His mercy endureth for ever." He is the God, "merciful" —or *full* of mercy, and all His mercies are "*tender* mercies"; and His kindnesses "*loving* kindnesses." But most transcendent is He in His pardons. Here indeed the incomparable God shines forth in glory all His own. His pardons, like Himself, are infinite, and know no bounds or limit. Well may we sing in triumph

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

My purpose this evening is, by the Lord's help to set forth before you the all-excelling nature of our God's forgiveness. This we shall try and do by asking seven questions, each question like our text, challenging comparison.

I. WHO PARDONS AT SUCH A COST? Earthly pardons are cheap luxuries. Although often hard to get and difficult to give, yet most cost but the *sacrifice of a little personal feeling.* Let that go, and it is easy to forgive. I can easily imagine there are two here this evening who have long been severed in their friendship. Both feel a reconciliation ought to have taken place before this, but they say, if spoken to on the subject, "it is impossible." Why? The simple reason is that neither is prepared to pay his share of the cost of a pardon, and that amounts to the sacrifice of a little personal pique, and a good deal of foolish pride. Neither likes to be the first to offer his hand. Both are waiting for each other, and so a miserable estrangement is carried on through weary months and years, because neither will exchange pride for pardon. O 'tis a thousand pities that when pardons are so cheap, they yet remain so scarce! Turn now to the pardon of our God and see if it be not an incomparable one for cost. Before God could forgive a sinner in accordance with His infinite holiness and perfect justice think what had to be done, sacrificed and suffered. Measure God's desire to pardon by the obstacles His pardoning love overcame, and then you can form some idea of its intensity. No little sacrifice of feeling—no small surrender of pride would have availed here; something infinitely greater must be surrendered, and the sacrifice must be that of a Son. God has fathomed His love and pity in one text, "God *so* loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That little word "so" contains more than heaven or earth can describe. In it is the heart of God—in it is the depth of pardoning love. O think for a minute what that pardon cost that now makes your soul to sing for joy. You received it freely enough because another paid the price; but what was that price? It cost the Father

the gift of His beloved Son—He who from eternity had dwelt in His bosom, must be surrendered and become incarnate. It cost the Son a price no lip can tell—no heart conceive. Do you see Him tied to yonder pillar—mark you that awful scourge as it falls again and again upon His quivering flesh; do you note how deep the thongs cut, drawing blood at every stroke? Your pardon cost *that.* "By His stripes we are healed." Follow Him in that weary walk to Calvary—linger by Him as fever courses through His veins, whilst head and hands and feet all drip with gore—stay by Him until His sacred head falls upon the breast, and His great heart breaks with anguish, and then looking up into that white countenance, say "my pardon cost Him that." Yes, no pardon could ever have come to guilty man had not an atonement been made that satisfied justice, honoured the law and magnified the holiness of God. Sweet work is it to trace the silver stream of forgiving love; and mark how it *would* flow on until it reached the sinner, yea, even though it flowed along the channel of a Saviour's wounds. Contrast beloved, this evening, the poor cheap pardons of man, often withheld because he will not sacrifice his foolish feelings or his paltry pride, with the rich costly pardons of our God, given at the price of His own Son—given through the agonies of Gethsemane and Golgotha.

II. WHO PARDONS TO SUCH AN EXTENT?

Truly the poet is right when he says that the tenderest hearts have limits to their mercy. The most loving may have his compassion put to a test that shall prove the best of human love is but human love at best. With the generality however, the limit of forgiveness is soon reached. Many are the crimes marked down by men as "unpardonable." All Europe seems to agree in putting the wretched assassins and incendiaries of Paris beyond the pale of mercy or hope for pardon. Their hands are too red with blood—their outrages too gross and vile. But behold God, and wonder at his pardoning love!! Man has revolted against Him—murdered His servants—lighted His church with the fires of martyrdon—laughed to scorn and derided His Book, and even crucified His own Son, and yet he says to such red-handed rebels "Come now and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

No sinner has ever yet been lost because his sins were too great for pardon. God's power and willingness to forgive, go beyond—yea, infinitely beyond—the greatest lengths of sin into which any desperate sinner has dared to run. Go bring me the vilest wretch that breathes the air of heaven—out of depravity bring me the most depraved—one on whose head is accumulated the guilt of every sin, and every sin in its most aggravated and malignant form—one who has vice written in every line of his sin-stamped countenance and hell's hatred in his heart; and I venture to say to such a one "there is mercy sufficient for thee and God's pardoning love reaches a deeper depth than thine iniquity." Men are not damned because their sins surpass mercy, but because they refuse to accept it when offered. God's pardoning mercy is like the waters of the red sea when it rolled upon the Egyptian host; the captains and the charioteers were as much overwhelmed as the common footmen. The impetuous tide knew no distinction, it drowned Pharaoh with as much ease as the horses in his chariot; it swept in

triumph over all alike. The great sins and the mighty sins are as easily drowned in the blood of Jesus, as those, which in our ignorance, we call but "failings." The depths of pardon cover them; they sink into the bottom as a stone; the sea covers them, they sink as lead in its mighty waters. O blessed deluge of forgiving mercy. surely this second question has stirred our hearts to highest gratitude, and put on every lip the adoring challenge!!

"Who is a pardoning God like thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

III. WHO PARDONS SO WILLINGLY? It is almost difficult to decide which calls for loudest praise, the pardon or the way in which the pardon is bestowed. Not only is God incomparable in the forgivenesses He has, but also in the the way He gives them. Human pardons are generally spoilt in the mode of bestowal. The bloom of their beauty is lost by the hot hand that holds them so long before it parts with them. Too often man's pardon is only the result of long pleading. It never gushed forth towards the guilty one with holy alacrity, but was wrung out by many an argument and plea; then when it came how ungracious was it in its language. Who, among us, has not known what it is to be forgiven in such a way that we felt more miserable after the pardon than before, and inwardly resolved we would never ask another from the man. Henry Ward Beecher has well said "there is an ugly kind of forgiveness in this world—a kind of hedgehog forgiveness, shot out like quills. Men take one who has offended them and set him down before the blow-pipe of their indignation, and scorch him, and burn his fault into him, and when they have kneaded him with their fiery fists, then they forgive him." How different the manner of our God—how infinitely higher in this matter are His ways than our ways. I will show you an illustration or two of *how* the Lord forgives. Our Saviour is sitting at meat in the house of Simon the Pharisee, when a woman comes timidly to the door. The woman is too well known, her shame has been her living. She is a sinner—a woman of the town. Respectable morality will

"Make a wide sweep,
Lest she wander too nigh."

She is fallen, and sanctimonious phariseeism would lose its caste if it was weak enough to pity. Something tells this poor creature that Jesus may be ventured nigh; perhaps she has marked a look of deep compassion on His face as she has passed Him in the streets, and that look has broke the heart—at all events she comes to where he is, and bending over His feet upon the couch, big tears begin to fall. The bold look of the past has gone, she can but sob as she remembers it. Her tears wet those blessed feet she has come to anoint with ointment, so stooping down, she uses her long tresses to wipe them. The host at the head of the table looks on with scorn, He seems to have known the woman well, and says within himself "If he were a prophet he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him." Jesus perceives his thoughts, rebukes him, and then turning to the weeping sinner, says, "Thy sins are forgiven; go in peace." O the exquisite tenderness of our Lord in giving that guilty soul its pardon.

Yet again. The scribes and Pharisees bring unto Him one day a woman taken in adultery. Here is, if anything, a greater sinner than the last. They demand that she should be stoned to death and ask His

approval of the sentence. Appearing to be occupied in writing on the ground he only for a moment looks up to say, "He that is without sin, let him first cast a stone at her." Convicted in their own consciences, they leave one by one, until only the woman remains. Jesus looks up again from the ground, and says to that guilty wife, "Hath no man condemned thee?" and she said "No man, Lord." "Neither do I condemn thee; *go and sin no more.*" Could anything be more delicately done? Could reproof and pardon be more sweetly blended? Would you yet know, dear friends, how God forgives? Then take His own picture in the parable of the prodigal son, and there in every line you will behold the beauty of His pardon. In the father who sees the prodigal "afar off," who "has compassion," who "runs," who "kisses," who interrupts even the confession of guilt, and puts on the best robe at once; in all these things I behold my God who is "*ready* to forgive," and am compelled to sing

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

IV. WHO PARDONS SO FREQUENTLY? On this point there can be no question. No difference of opinion. The stock of man's pardons is very soon exhausted. I have no doubt Peter thought he displayed marvellous magnanimity when he said to the Lord, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him; till seven times?" Seven times seemed to him a great many, but how few and small they looked after the Saviour's answer. "I say not unto thee until seven times; but until seventy times seven." How much greater was the divine idea of pardon than the human. Peter and Christ both consulted their own hearts, but how different the response. But He who tells us to forgive our brother seventy times seven, forgives His brethren seventy million times seven, and more than that. We notice when we *do* forgive. Never is there a minute when our God is *not* forgiving. His pardoning love runs parallel with our erring life. I marvel not that Newton said "I am downright staggered at the exceeding riches of his grace. How Christ can go on pardoning day after day, hour after hour!!! Sometimes I feel almost afraid to ask for a fresh pardon for very shame." Who has not felt the same? The very multitude of God's pardons overwhelms. It would tire out any angel to write down all the pardons that God bestows on one of His children. Dear friend, if indeed you be a christian, then rejoice in the thought that you are ever pardoned. True is it, even unto you, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." O, how precious is that present tense—"cleanseth"—keeps on cleansing, never ceasing in its purifying work. Being reconciled unto God, the friendship is ever maintained—sins forgiven as soon as committed—wrongs pardoned every day—guilt purged by precious blood every moment. O bear me witness, saints of God, that His willingness to forgive has often amazed you although you knew it well—over and over again have you returned unto Him after seasons of backsliding, until you felt ashamed to go again—you felt He could never forgive you any more, it was almost presumption on your part to ask for it; but at last you were obliged to seek His face, you could stay away no longer. With many a tear you told Him how again you had fallen into the very sin that had been forgiven a thousand times, and how you felt you were no more worthy to be called His son. How did He receive you? Never

can you forget how He ran to meet you, and as if this was the first offence hastened to give the kiss of forgiveness lest your heart should break with sorrow. Then did you indeed sing.

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

V. WHO PARDONS SO COMPLETELY? There is much that goes by the name of forgiveness that is no true pardon at all. The tongue may declare that all is forgiven and forgotten, but let some fresh little difference arise, and all the past has a resurrection—old wrongs that have been buried for years, rise from their graves, all the more hideous for their partial burial. Forgiving love had never made clean work of it. The remembrance of the past still rankled in the breast, it required but a touch to remove the outer skin and reveal the festering wound beneath, or, to use another illustration, wrath's fire had never been put quite out, it had just smouldered for years, and a new wrong stirred the slumbering embers and made the old flames break out again. Not so is it with the pardon of our God. It is as real in its nature as comprehensive in its embrace—it is as true as oft repeated. God never brings old scores up again, or taunts with the past whilst He forgives the present. When He says "forgiven," we are forgiven, and the sins He buries in the grave of pardoning love never live or are seen again. The grave is too deep for hell to find them.

Have you ever, beloved, noticed the different terms employed in scripture to set forth the forgiveness of our God? They are well worthy of study. Words and illustrations more expressive of completeness could not be found. I will mention one or two. Not only are they declared to be "covered," but "washed" away. "He hath washed us from our sins in His own blood." However perfectly anything may be covered, it yet *exists*, therefore the more expressive term of washing is employed. When a stain has been removed by purging it is something more than hidden, it *is clean gone*, so entirely so that the same can never be restored. A fresh one may take its place, but the old one is no more. Our previous question showed that the fresh one shares the fate of the old. As if "washing" were not sufficiently forcible a stronger word is also used "as for our transgressions, Thou shalt *purge* them away," and again, "when He had by Himself *purged* our sins He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Washing and purging imply thorough work. Another beautiful emblem is that of "blotting" them out. Just as the sun not only shines through the cloud but dissipates it—blots it out of existence and leaves nothing but the blue firmament over head, so says God "I have *blotted out* as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." "I, even, I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not *remember* thy sins." Our sins when pardoned are as the cloud that melts in the air—gone. They are also declared to be "removed," and that to an infinite distance, "as far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Who shall say where the east commences or where the west terminates? The distance is boundless. Yet as far as the furthest east is from the remotest west, so far has pardoning love taken our sins from us. They are not nigh thee, believer, they have been carried by thy scape-goat into a land uninhabited; so far that even the eye of God perceives them not. Yet one more illustration and I think the loveliest of them

all. You will find it in the chapter from which the text is taken and the nineteenth verse. "Thou wilt cast all their sins into *the depths of the sea.*" Notice here two beauties. First the number of sins that God takes away, "*all* their sins." Not one is left to tell the tale. Observe secondly where all the sins are cast. "In the depths of the sea." Not in any river lest like Kishon it should run dry and reveal the hidden crime. Not in the foam of the waves that break along the beach, lest when the tide went down they should be left high dry upon the shore. But "in the depths;" far out to sea, where the waters cover the face of the deep. There God drops His people's sins. They are out of sight—eternally hidden—not only forgiven but forgotten—wondrous love!!

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

VI. *Whose pardon is so full of grace?* Only a word or so on this division. However sweet human pardon may be, there is nothing gracious in it. There is not one reason why we should *not* forgive, there are millions why we should. Needing forgiveness ourselves of man, 'tis but our duty to forgive. But why should God forgive us? What reasons can there be but those found in His own gracious purposes why He should pardon fallen man. The roots of pardoning love are in His own heart, and therefore the fruits appear on us. It is Archbishop Whately who says "It is a remarkable fact that the words in all European languages which express forgiveness or pardon, all imply *free gift.*" Here indeed our God stands forth incomparable, for "who has grace so rich and free?"

VII. *Whose pardon but His subdues the sin.* Most beautiful is the teaching of that sentence in the following verse to our text. He who pardons our iniquities subdues them as well. The fond parent may forgive his child over and over again, and yet die of a broken heart through seeing that the more frequently he forgives, the more reckless does his son become. He has the love to pardon, but not the power to subdue the sin. Blessed be God, He has both. Whilst He forgives the result He heals the cause. God subdues our iniquities *by* forgiving them. It is a great mistake to imagine that a consciousness of pardon will lead to an indifference about sin. Love is a mightier motive power than fear, and gratitude, for forgiveness will make the soul hate sin far more than a dread of lacking pardon. It is when we enjoy in the fullest measure the sweets of pardon felt, that we abhor our sins with deepest detestation. Is it not, dear child of God, a joyful thought, that whilst infinite love keeps on pardoning our ever recurring sins, infinite power is at the same time bringing our wayward hearts more and more under control. God is gradually putting our iniquities beneath His feet and still pardoning them as they rise.

I will now conclude with a sentence or so of application. Believer, rejoice! rejoice!! rejoice!!! You are a traitor if you do not sing. The past is forgiven—the present is being forgiven—the future will be forgiven. You are surrounded by pardons, and they line the road to heaven's gate. O triumph in your God to-night—let your soul make her boast in the Lord, and sing of pardon bought with blood.

Sinner, has this verse no word of hope to you? It has. It is all hope. Whilst it stands part of inspired writ thou never needst despair. Do you say, "but there is no sinner like me?" Granted,

and there is no God like our pardoning God. Let an incomparable sinner and an incomparable Saviour meet to-night. Thou shalt find His pardons are even greater and more numerous than thy crimes. I have read of a most hardened sinner who was condemned to death in the town of Ayr. It pleased the Lord, however, to save his soul whilst in prison, and so full was his assurance of pardoning mercy, that when he came to the place of execution, he could not help crying out to the people, "Oh, He is a great forgiver! He *is a great forgiver.*" The Lord have mercy on you my hearer, and then with us you will exclaim—

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

Scripture Read—Psalm CVII.
Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book.—136, Part I. 201—202

TRENTO, THE TYROL, AUSTRIA,
July 16th, 1871.

BELOVED READER,

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and our dear Lord Jesus Christ through the ever blessed Spirit our comforter.

Whoever thou art or wheresoever this finds thee I pray that "the precious things of heaven" may be your portion here and your exceeding great reward throughout eternity.

My thoughts at this time are especially directed to the blessedness of an English Sabbath, the joy of worship and the privilege of going with the multitude that keeps holy day. How little, alas, is the sweet day valued as it deserves. To know its preciousness it is necessary for a season to be denied its mercies. What would not my heart now give to hear some one say "let us go up to the house of the Lord."

Whilst I am writing these lines you are doubtless found in some sanctuary endeared to you by a thousand beloved recollections. Before you is the open Bible—surrounding you is the music of grateful hearts, and you are anticipating being led into green pastures and beside the waters of quietness.

Not so is it with me. The churches are Roman Catholic—priests abound—and in every street crucifixes and figures of the virgin are to be seen. Not a protestant sanctuary is there in the town.

The hotel is my sanctuary and you, dear reader, one of my congregation.

Fellow christian—for I am supposing you to be such—let us seek more and more to "walk in the light." Let us not be satisfied with an external form of godliness, without an inward fellowship with a risen Saviour. We are too prone to be zealous only over our outward walk and comparatively careless about our inward spiritual health. This is wrong. A true christian life should be one that *grows out* of communion with Jesus, not one that is merely *built up*.

I am persuaded that neglect of soul culture is the secret cause of all great falls in the outward life.

It is possible to keep up a fair appearance until the last moment, and then like some tree of the forest, the very heart of which has been eaten out by decay, fall before the first sudden blast of temptation.

These few lines will be sure to come before some of my unsaved readers, so I must have a word with them. Dear friend, I pray you close in with the overtures of mercy given by a loving Jesus. Accept Him as *your* Saviour, and you are saved at once. To you who are my own loved people I send my heart's warmest affection. Constantly are you in my thoughts and prayers, and joyful to me will be the day when again I stand in your midst to preach the blessed gospel. I hope to be with you on Thursday, August 10th, and give an account of my journey. Many have been the sights I have already beheld, and Italy and Switzerland yet remain unseen. May God bless and keep you all, and make this my season of rest of some profit to you.

Yours, in the love of Jesus,
ARCHIBALD G. BROWN.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE FIRST SERMON ON RETURNING HOME.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 13TH, 1871, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts."—PSALM lxxxiv—1.

ALTHOUGH David's name does not appear in the heading of this psalm, there is but little, if any doubt, that it was from his pen the sweet verses flowed. We can feel him near as we read. His spirit breathes through the whole, and the wording has the peculiar ring that we have learned to love so well. The voice of the sweet singer of Israel is not easily mistaken. His notes have been so often heard, and always make themselves so well remembered, that whatever may be their theme, they are sure to be detected. It is not always necessary to have the name of the visitor who has just called announced. The voice we heard asking "if we were at home" tells us without any assistance from others, who the friend is that asks for us. So is it with this psalm. The first verse assures us that David is speaking, and we are as certain of the fact as if his name occurred in every other line. The sentiments are not more entirely his than the manner in which they are uttered. We have but to turn to a psalm that bears his name to be convinced the same man is author of both. Turn with me to the sixty-third, the heading of which states that it was written by David when he was in the wilderness of Judah. Read the first and second verses, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Contrast that first verse with the second verse of this psalm, and you will see they are almost identical. "My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Surely the same heart speaks in both verses. It is generally supposed that it was written during the psalmist's exile through his son Absalom's revolt. This however matters but little. It is enough for us to know that when through some circumstances he was shut out from the privileges of the tabernacle, his heart yearned after them. The beauty of worship was enhanced in his eyes by his forced absence, and he felt envious of the the very sparrows and swallows who made their nests in the tabernacle, and flitted round its altars. At last out of the abundance of his heart his lips were obliged to speak, and his feelings found vent in the exclamation, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts."

It is no drawback that no name appears as author. It is the psalm of every child of God. Spiritual life, and love to the sanctuary always run parallel. Where the latter is wanting, there is good ground for suspecting the existence—certainly the health—of the former. If my professed christianity has not endeared the house of God to my soul, it has not done very much for me, for it is one of the very first-fruits of a renewed nature. Let us then this morning join in spirit with the psalmist, let us unite our voices with his in singing the beauties of worship, and the charms of the sanctuary. I am free to confess that there has perhaps been something of selfishness in my choice of this text. Most assuredly it is the echo of my own heart. After having been surrounded for five weeks with all the pomp and show and superstition of the Church of Rome, I *do* find God's tabernacles most amiable. After having spent weary Lord's-days when the only choice was to hear blasphemy or nothing, I do rejoice with a joy more than I can well describe to find myself again surrounded with the associations of an English Sabbath—to find myself once more among the multitude that keeps holy-day, and above all to be in this sanctuary, endeared by so many happy remembrances, and among you with whom I have so often enjoyed sweetest fellowship. My heart exclaims—may yours also—"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts."

I will try and speak to you upon this text under four divisions. First—*wherein lies the beauty of the house of God.* Secondly—*when this beauty is most seen.* Thirdly—*the extent to which it is appreciated,* "how" Fourthly—*The only man who is able to discern it.* May the Lord help us in our meditations that this tabernacle may this morning become most amiable.

I. WHEREIN LIES THE BEAUTY OF THE HOUSE OF GOD? When David expressed his admiration of the tabernacle, what was it that suggested the exclamation. *Certainly not the outside.* Whatever beauty there was in the building was not to be beheld from without. Brilliant were the hues of the inside curtain that covered the structure. Simpler was the ram's skin dyed red that was placed over, and the outward covering of badgers' skins was a rough material devoid of all attractiveness. No one gazing upon the tabernacle as an art critic would have seen anything to prompt the cry, "how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." It had no inviting look, no flashing colours, no wealthy glitter. It was plain almost to ugliness—unpretentious to a degree. Yet this badger-skin-covered place outshone in David's eyes the silken luxury of ten thousand tents. Whilst absent from it, he never ceased to picture its outline in his mind, and the remembrance stirred his heart to its lowest depths. The want of it made the most fertile land as a dry and thirsty wilderness, and beyond his city or his throne, he longed to tread its courts. In a few minutes I will show you what *was* the charm, but at present I am only pointing out what it certainly was *not.*

May we not learn from this, dear friends, that no mere outward loveliness of building can ever satisfy the spiritual soul. To such an one the exterior is a matter of comparative indifference. I know that by some I shall be looked upon almost in the light of a Goth for

venturing such an assertion. Perhaps I am in this respect, but I am still certain I am correct. In proportion as one learns to worship God in the spirit he becomes unconcerned about the particular architecture of the building. As a piece of workmanship he may admire it as much as any, but as a place of worship it possesses no more charm than the country barn devoted on the Lord's-day to the preaching of the gospel. I fear that in the present day reverence for mere bricks and mortar is becoming a very fashionable error. Beauty of design in the sanctuary walls is thought more of than beauty of holiness in sanctuary worship. This is the result of a religion that goes no deeper than the eye sees. But to the man educated of God, mere external symmetry will be powerless to evoke the psalmist's exclamation of "how amiable are thy tabernacles." He wants something more. Something that touches the inner springs of the soul. During the past five weeks it has been my privilege to see some of the great masterpieces of religious architecture. I have gazed upon Cologne Cathedral with exquisite pleasure and marvelled at the skill that could rear a building so vast and yet so light that it appeared more like lacework than solid stone. I have wandered round about the majestic cathedral of Milan, built of white marble, and glittering in the sun like a snowdrift. I have roamed through the peerless churches of Venice, the queen of the seas, and been captivated with their exquisite mosaics, altars of boundless worth and pictures beyond price, but not in any one of them has such a feeling been excited as induced David to utter the words of our text. I left them as I entered, or perhaps more truthfully speaking with a sickening desire for something that spoke to the heart as well as captivated the eyes. It is easy to imagine that in any one of these the born architect could spend a day or week with growing pleasure. All around him would speak to the genius within. He could feast his eyes upon the tapering spires without, and the rich wood and stone carvings within. Every monument would be a study and every shrine a fountain of delight. The painter might here linger with ecstacy among the incarnations of a Rubens' genius. But if either architect or painter were a child of God, his soul would be as unmoved as his mind was delighted. These things serve the intellectual taste, but leave the spiritual unsatisfied. No brick, no wood, no stone, no marble, however lavish the skill expended on them, can ever constitute the beauty of the sanctuary in the eyes of the saint. It consists not in the outward. Where is it then? I answer, *in the worship within.* When David longed for the tabernacle, and thought of its beauty, he went in imagination within the covering. Yea, it was not the place itself that in any way filled his heart, but the worship of God within it. How significant is the second verse, and how clearly it shows *what* it was that he wanted. "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the *living God.*" Yes, it was a living God, not lifeless stones or silver that he valued. He remembered that it was in the tabernacle the sacrifices were slain, and there the typical blood dyed the altars red. It was there the incense rose in clouds—a sweet-smelling savour unto God. It was there the united songs of the Levites ascended. It was there his heart had met with its God, and the thousand hallowed recollections of

communion draped the place in loveliness. Beloved, is it not so with us. Far simpler though our worship be—these things of outward ritual have been done away with by our Lord—the same charm yet remains. Granted that we have no sacrifices and flowing blood, we yet have "Christ crucified" set forth in the preaching of the word as the one great and all-sufficient sacrifice for sin. If no incense floats in clouds above our heads, we yet have the joy of united prayer, when prayer blends with prayer, and together rise more fragrant to our God than the perfume of Aaron's censer. If no band of Levites with trained voices chant His praise, yet have we the united song of grateful hearts. Not less in holy joy, if less in outward grandeur, is the worship of the new covenant than the old. We still have the living God in our midst. That makes any place a sanctuary. What would the Jewish tabernacle have been without the divinely-appointed worship within? Nothing. Only a collection of meaningless and worthless curtains, skins, pillars and ropes. Just the same value is any place of worship apart from the worship of the place. I know that there are to be found some who have a silly, superstitious reverence for the building, who almost imagine that some kind of sanctity lingers in the bricks and mortar. Let us away with such folly. No building is one iota holier than another. Where God is worshipped *in the spirit*, be it a room, a barn, or in the open air, there whilst the worship lasts is a house of God. A house of God without worship is a fiction and a lie.

But here I must meet an objection that has doubtless risen in the minds of some. It shapes itself something after this form, "all you have said may be very true, but does it not apply equally to *private* worship? Cannot we commune with Christ, sing His praises, and engage in prayer as much when alone as with His people; and if so, where is the peculiar beauty of sanctuary worship? God forbid that these lips should ever utter a word in disparagement of secret worship. Those only who know what it is by experience know its sweetness. He who loves public worship the most will also most prize private fellowship. Yet I do venture to say that higher joys and greater blessings may be expected from the former than the latter, and that therefore it is a worship of a higher kind. I will try and prove this point in four ways. First, *clearer manifestations may be expected of God in public worship than in private.* It were impious to imagine that he who uttered the words of our text was not a man who enjoyed much secret communion with his God. Doubtless David knew far more of it than any of us. He could say "I cry unto Thee all the day." In the night watches he had his songs, and in the morning his thoughts were with his God. Yet this same man often speaks as if it was only in the sanctuary he obtained his grandest views of God, and longs for public worship that he may obtain that which he seems unable to obtain in private. Turn with me to the twenty-seventh psalm and fourth verse, and you will read, "one thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."—Why? Mark the reason, "to behold *the beauty* of the Lord." This certainly seems to imply that David found he could obtain a grander view of the beauty of his Lord in the sanctuary than in the palace. All the manifestations of God's power and glory that

he beheld in solitude left his soul still longing for the more magnificent views of the sanctuary. So is it with us. To see our God in all His royal robes, and view Him in His regal splendour, we must enter the courts of His house. It is there we exclaim "we have seen the goings of our God and king." There are some snow-crowned mountains in Switzerland that can only be fully seen from the summit of a lower hill top. Looking at them from the valley, half their glittering peaks are hidden. To see Him who is our high mountain in all His magnificence, it is necessary to ascend the hill of Zion. For this reason if for no other, public worship excels private.

Again, *public worship has a greater power to help the soul than private.* Every person is to a great extent a creature of circumstances, and all are greatly influenced by surroundings. I willingly grant that when the soul is in a serene and happy frame, there are gentle joys in secret fellowship that cannot be surpassed by anything in the sanctuary, but this frame of soul is unfortunately more the exception than the rule in the experience of most. Now in an unprepared state of heart there is a yearning for outward help, a longing for something that will make its power felt. The soul wants something that will with happy force carry it along when it feels to weak itself to press its way. Just this something is found in the united worship of the Lord's people. The very atmosphere is congenial to spiritual progress. Every surrounding speaks of God, and prompts his worship. There may be some, and I believe there are, who live so habitually near their Lord that they become in a great measure independent of outward helps. Wherever they are, they make a sanctuary, because they carry one in their own breasts. But such Christians as these are few indeed. I question if we have one in our number this morning. Most of us feel that, instead of living above circumstances, we are as sensitive to them as the mercury of the barometer is to the atmosphere that surrounds it. To such, how precious is the influence of God's house. There is something sweetly contagious in worship. The grand song of praise rising from hundreds of grateful lips lifts our soul up with it before ever we are aware. In the stream of united prayer our soul finds itself swept up to the mercy-seat. There is a *stimulus* in seeing others in the spirit that quickens our flagging powers. God who has provided these means of grace alone knows how dependent we are upon their use. We only discover the same when deprived of their help. Another reason also gives the sanctuary an additional beauty in the eye of the saint, namely that *there the Lord still performs his greatest works.* We are told that the age of miracles is passed, and only fools expect them. I am not prepared to say so myself. I know the age for *expecting* them seems past, and that is perhaps the reason so few are seen. But whatever may be the case in the outside world, they still take place in the sanctuary. If in our streets no blind are made to see, no lame to leap, no deaf to hear, no dead to live, yet in our sanctuaries these things are common occurrences. Higher far than the miracle which heals the body is the miracle that saves the soul; and every conversion *is* a miracle. Who can tell what marvels are done during one service? Yonder is a sinner who came into the place stone blind as far as any spiritual sights are concerned. Lo! he leaves exclaiming, "one thing

I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." Upon those sightless orbs the Lord has laid His hands, and night is turned into day. There is one who entered deaf to all the music of a Saviour's name. But wondrous change, he sings

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds."

The lame man who has long been lying at the Beautiful Gate, now starts upon his feet, and walks and leaps, singing praises to his God. Yea, the soul that has been dead for years hears a voice "Come forth," and at the mandate lives. Whilst God is pleased to make the assemblies of His house the arena of His saving might, every saint must exclaim with the psalmist, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts."

Lastly on this point, and only for a moment, *public worship more resembles that of heaven than private.* Every picture we have of heavenly worship sets it forth as the united worship of a countless host, and the very multitude of the worshippers make its grandeur. The congregation we are told consists of a number that no man can number, and their singing is as the sound of many mighty rushing waters. Their song is one—their music one—their worship one. In the service of the sanctuary, the nearest approach is made to the likeness of the heavenly. It is there above all places where we may anticipate a foretaste ot our future bliss. So much then for our first point. I think we have together seen that the beauty of the sanctuary consists not in anything external, but in the gracious manifestations God is there pleased to make of Himself. Manifestations that exceed in glory those obtained in secret communion.

II. When this Beauty is most Seen. The amiability of God's tabernacle is not always equally perceived. There are times when we are led to utter the words of our text with a deeper emphasis than usual. Seasons when an unprecedented glory fills the house. I will just mention a few times when God's house seems to possess a charm almost beyond description. Certainly we must place first on the list, *the few Sabbaths immediately following conversion.* What a blessed freshness there is about the worship then; It is something so new, so different to any joy experienced before that its very novelty lends enchantment. Do not you remember it this morning, friend, although many a long year has passed since then. Over and over again you had passed by that plain "meeting house" as you called it. Sometimes perhaps you dropped in, and "endured" a service. Right glad were you to get outside again, and sweeping were your criticisms about the uncomfortable pews, bad singing and long sermon. Well, God in His mercy met with you. Old things passed away, and every thing became new. Amongst them your opinion of the village chapel. When first you entered it as a Christian, you thought the place must have been changed as much as yourself. The old dingy place had become delightful. It seemed to you as if the foot of Jacob's ladder rested in your very pew, and on every round an angel stood. The services were all too short to meet your taste, and too few to satisfy your longings. It was the most beautiful building in the town to your eye. Deep from the heart came the words "*how* amiable are thy tabernacles." Ah, friends, I would to God we could ever carry on us the dew of our spiritual youth, ever maintain that happy freshness. Who does not remember the

first time he saw the ocean? Has it ever looked so blue since, or its waves appeared so fresh? I think not. We may perhaps imagine that it was a peculiarly fine day then. No doubt it was! but there must have been as fine since. Surely the first glimpse had something to do with the beauty that we have never seen repeated. So is it with the service of the sanctuary—wonder is mingled with the bliss we feel. O, that first time at the Lord's table!! Do you remember it? Nay, can you ever forget it? How the hand trembled as it took the bread and cup! Not with fear, but through the very excitement of the joy. The Lord's tabernacles were then indeed most amiable.

The beauty of the sanctuary is also wonderful, *when there is that in the service specially suited to our present experience.* Have you not known what it is to feel every part of the service intended for you above all others. The Holy Ghost seemed to have planned all for your peculiar benefit. The very hymns sung were just the ones you were singing over to yourself before coming. The prayer expressed the desires of your heart as exactly as if you had offered it yourself. As to the sermon, you felt there must be something more than chance in it. God made the man say just the very things your soul wanted. If he had been listening to your difficulties for an hour, he could not have spoken more home. It was a blessed service to you, no matter what it was to others. It was a red letter day in your Sabbaths, and can never be forgotten. When God gives us such seasons as these, dear friends—and would that we had them more often—then does the beauty of the sanctuary shine forth with increased charms, and we exclaim, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts."

I would add, lastly on this portion, that the beauty of the sanctuary can only be fully seen *after a season of forced absence.* Can you ever forget the joy you felt when for the first time you managed to crawl up to the house of God after that long sickness. Many a weary Sabbath had you passed within the four walls of your bedroom. Little better were those you were permitted to spend in the sitting room. But one day the doctor said, "if next Sunday is fine you may venture out." How you watched the glass, and almost prayed it might point to 'fair.' And when the day came, and you once more found yourself in the loved spot, what an extra beauty there seemed in the service. True, you were too weak to stand or join in the singing, but your heart kept singing "how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." But from whatever cause the absence may come—so long as it be forced absence—the joy of return is immense. Speaking personally I can say I never knew how much I loved the sanctuary until two weeks ago. For three Lord's days I had been surrounded by nothing but superstition, pomp and priests. Weary days they were, and the remembrance of the happy seasons here only served to make them worse. On the fourth Sabbath being at Lucerne I was enabled to attend the free church of Scotland. The service was held in a Roman Catholic Church—the use of which had been in some manner secured—the altars were all covered up with red baize and the place made to look as plain and as christian as possible. About seventy or eighty were present. The service was commenced by the minister giving out that well known psalm.

"All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, &c."

The precentor being absent, one of the congregation at the request of the minister started the singing. The tune was the "old hundredth." Some perhaps may smile and think I was rather effeminate when I tell them, that after a few bars had been sung, my voice failed me and I felt as if I must weep. That simple song of true praise did what all the peals of the cathedral organs had failed to do. The change was so great—the worship so simple—God so manifestly present—that looking upon that place with all its supposed beauty covered up and hidden I was forced to say "how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." Lucerne will long linger in my memory as the place where I learnt how beautiful the place of true worship is to the child of God.

Only a minute or two remains to describe the EXTENT TO WHICH THE BEAUTY IS APPRECIATED, AND THE ONLY MAN WHO CAN APPRECIATE IT AT ALL. The *first* word of the text gives us an idea of the extent of David's appreciation and well may the verse close with a note of admiration. The psalmist felt that it was impossible to tell in words the beauty of the place. He could but exclaim "HOW amiable" and leave it for hearts which have felt the same to fathom the depths of the word. This we know however, that in his eyes the tabernacle made of skins outshone in beauty all the silken tents of luxury and sin, and one day in its courts was worth more to him than a thousand spent elsewhere. The "how" defies all measurement and description. The only man who can behold this beauty is also learnt from one word—the little word "thy." It was because the tabernacle was GODS that its beauty appeared so great. Now no alien from God can find a joy in anything, *because* it is Gods. He who loves not a person can never see a beauty in that person's house simply because it is his. Affection for the inhabitant must precede love for the habitation. The only person therefore who can truthfully utter this text as his own experience is he who loving God, has learned to love all that belongs to God and all that aids him in communion with God. Can we say from this cause "how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts? The Lord give us grace to do so for Jesus' sake.—Amen.

Scripture Read—Psalms xxvii and lxxxiv.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book.—84 Part ii—27—122 Part ii.

DEAR READER,

On Thursday, September 21st, the FIRST MEETING will be held in our new Tabernacle. Joseph Tritton, Esq., has kindly promised to preside. We want to pay in on that occasion as large an amount as possible. Will you help us in the effort? How would our hearts rejoice if *every* reader of this sermon were to send us but a trifle. The Lord incline YOU to make one of the number.

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN.

17, BANCROFT ROAD,
MILE END ROAD, E.

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 10TH, 1871, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."
HEBREWS iv—15.

RATHER more than a year ago I endeavoured to lead your thoughts to this same text. Then we meditated more particularly upon the words "high priest," and looked upon our Saviour as filling that office. This morning I purpose dwelling upon the sympathy of Jesus as taught in the words, "Touched with the feeling of our infirmities." With an old text we shall yet tread on entirely new ground. Sympathy! There is something in the very word that appeals to the heart and commands attention. If all possess it not, nearly all are ready to sing its praises. Even in this fallen world, the hearts are few that will deny their tribute of commendation to this gentle attribute. It has many friends and few foes. There may be, perhaps, and doubtless is, a miserable little clique of dried up souls, who affect to despise sympathy as something too effeminate for them. They never give it because it is not in them, and they never receive it for the same reason. But these are a minority so insignificant, that a bare mention of their existence is almost more than they might expect. The great mass of mankind, however fallen and hardened in sin, has yet a soft place left for the charms of sympathy. There may perhaps be something selfish in the matter. Man knows that changes are so sudden, and almost as certain as sudden, that the one who is upon the top of the wheel to-day may be at the bottom to-morrow. The probability therefore of himself needing sympathy suggests the exhibition of it to others. But after deducting the selfish element, there yet remains a vast fellow-feeling in mankind—a latent sympathy—often smouldering, but which only needs the breath of sorrow to make it leap in flames. It has been well said, "Though the lower animals have feeling, they have no *fellow-feeling*, it only belongs to man to weep with them that weep, and by sympathy, to divide another's sorrows and double another's joys." I have read, that the wounded stag sheds tears as its life blood flows fast upon the purple heather, but never that its pangs and agonies drew tears from its fellows in the herd. That finer touch of nature belongs to man alone. Sympathy is the echo that a heart gives to another's cry of anguish. But a few weeks since I was in the land of mountains, crags and rocks, and there, at different well-

selected spots, I heard the blast of the Swiss horn. Grand were the echoes as they rolled among the mountain gorges, giving every snowy peak a voice, and every pine-clad hill a tongue. Marvellous was it to have the sound that first came from our very feet flung back upon our ears from distant ranges, that looked the very embodiment of silence. But more musical by far, because more heavenly, is the response given by a heart touched with the feeling of another's grief, and that grief, the grief of one who has no legal claim upon its sympathy. Well might the poet sing:—

"No radiant pearl, which crested Fortune wears,
No gem that twinkling hangs from Beauty's ears;
Not the bright stars, which Night's blue arch adorn;
Nor rising Sun, that gilds the vernal Morn;
Shine with such lustre as the Tear that flows
Down virtue's manly cheek for other's woes."

Yes, clearer than the pearl—more lustrous than a thousand gems—more cheering than the stars that light the night, and more radiant than the sun that makes the day, is the sympathy that feels and weeps and helps. But be it remembered, the best of human sympathy is but human sympathy at best. To see it in all its exquisite perfections of tenderness, we have to turn from man to his Maker—from the saint to his Saviour—from earth to heaven. This is what we desire to do this morning. In His great compassion, may our Lord help our meditations. In dwelling upon the sympathy of Jesus, we shall gather our thoughts into three divisions. as follows:—*It flows through knowledge. It is prompted by His nature. It is deepened by His experience.*

I. IT FLOWS THROUGH KNOWLEDGE. Ten thousands springs of earthly sympathy are sealed through ignorance. Bad though the world is, I yet believe that half of what is put down as want of sympathy might be more correctly described as want of knowledge. Not one tithe of the mass of misery existing comes before our eyes, and therefore what the eye does not see, the heart does not grieve, and ignorance seals the springs of generous feeling which would otherwise gush forth. Let me show you what I mean by an illustration. In yonder room there is a happy mother surrounded by three or four healthy romping children. It does my heart good to hear their merry ringing laughter, and watch their innocent but ceaseless play. The mother's eye lights up with natural pride, and yielding to the impulse of her heart, she joins her laugh with theirs, and takes her part in the merry games. Evening comes, and one little darling after another falls to sleep, soothed by the quiet lullaby she sings. Happy, happy sight. Who would for a moment have it otherwise? But come with me into the adjacent house, into the bedroom that is only separated from the one I have described by a four-and-a-half inch wall. There is a mother there, but what a contrast to the other. Her face is wan and pale, her eyes deep sunk and red with weeping; yet through them her whole soul seems to look forth in an intensity of anguish. She is sitting with hands clasped by the side of a little bed, on which white as the pillow on which his little head rests, lies her only boy, and he dying fast. He fights for breath and throws his poor little arms about, whilst the

rattle sounds in his throat. Yes, he is going, her only boy. The only one left her on earth after her husband's death. Going, and with him all her hopes and expectations of a future happier than the past. It is hard to realize and harder still to bear. The very thought of the blank his loss will make, convulses her with grief, as unclasping her hands she holds her burning brow, and the big tears roll down upon the coverlet. Yes, her boy is dying, and no one seems to care about it. Hark! What is that? It is the shout of the children in the next house, as they romp and play. Their laughter drives the dagger to its hilt. For them to be laughing, and *him* gasping his last. The contrast is too great. Night comes on, and the dying lad's face looks more ghastly still in the light of a single candle. And now the first mother's voice is heard singing her evening song. It is more than the poor crushed heart can bear, and she murmurs "why does she sing now, it is too unkind." Stay, poor soul; it is no want of sympathy, only a lack of knowledge. Had that happy mother known it was your dark hour, she would in a moment have hushed the laughter of her children, and stopping her own song, have blended her tears with yours. The wall that admits the sound shuts out the sight.

Do you see that sailor's wife as she tosses her child in motherly glee, and laughs as the sun glints upon the waters? Poor soul, she little thinks that her husband is fighting in the waves at that very moment for dear life. Or to come nearer home—as you walked to the house of God this morning in company with your friend, you chatted about a dozen different things. To hurt his feelings was furthest from your thoughts, and yet through ignorance of his history and present position, you gashed his heart a thousand times. You did not note the shudder that ran through his frame when you spoke of so and so being in pecuniary difficulties, and suggested it could not be long before he went completely to the wall. No, you thought he was rather silent and so talked on the faster to try and cheer him; not knowing that on the morrow the secret of his bankruptcy will be known, and his difficulties discussed in every business circle. Had you but known it, you would rather have had your tongue plucked out by the roots than have uttered the words you did. The fault, if there was any, was not in the heart, but in the head. It is perhaps a great mercy that but little of the sorrow which is in the world comes under our notice; as it is there is sufficient to make the heart ache, and test to the utmost our powers of help. But to see all would (if we had any sensitiveness of soul) "touch" the spirit so constantly and deeply that life would lose all charm, and every place become a Bochim.

Child of God, the sympathy of your Saviour is never lacking through want of knowledge. There is no wall of separation, however thin, that hides from His eyes the sorrow and the mercy within. *Jesus knows the every care of every saint.* Think for a moment what that means. Looking round upon the great company here this morning, the thought must come to every mind, what a collection of cares has been brought within these walls. Not one heart is there present but what contributes to the multitude, for "every heart knoweth its own bitterness," and in many cases what a number of bitternesses are crowded into one small heart. Surely there is not one home, that

has its representative here, however humble or affluent, but has also its skeleton, hidden perhaps from most, and draped with forced smiles. Yet there it remains, casting its shadow upon the hearth, and ploughing deep furrows upon the parent's brow. But what are we among the hosts that love the Lord? A mere drop of the bucket to the ocean full. And every saint in the myriad multitude has his own peculiar cares. If the company of saints be vast, what must be the number of their cares when every heart contributes its thousand? Innumerable indeed. Yet Jesus knows the every single care of every child of His. Not one need exclaim in despair "*my* way is hid from my God." Not from one is sympathy withheld through ignorance of his need. All is known and all is felt by Him we love, and by Whom we are loved. Poor troubled one, thou mayest venture nigh. Thou canst not tell Him that He knew not long before. Are you trying to carry your cares in your own bosom? Like the Spartan youth who stole a fox and hid it in his coat; are you letting it eat its way into your very vitals rather than it should be discovered? For pity's sake forbear. It is care untold and unbosomed that fills our madhouses and digs ten-thousand graves. Go cast yourselves upon the sympathy of Him who not only reads the sorrow of the face, but the deeper anguish of the heart. So much then for our first point. May the Lord give us all the comfort that is to be gleaned from the thought that the sympathy of Jesus is one that flows through knowledge.

"Anxious cares and heavy woes
Oft agitate my breast;
And no balm on earth that grows
Can give my spirit rest.
But midst worlds that lean on Thee,
Thou hast gentle thoughts for me."

II. The Sympathy of Jesus is Prompted by His Nature. In my previous division I have only supposed a want of sympathy owing to want of knowledge, but I have now to go further and say that with some to know is not to be touched—to see is not to sympathize. Some natures are *hard from their birth*. No one can recollect them anything else than stern, harsh, cold, unloveable, and unloving characters. In boyhood their games had no charm, unless spiced with a little cruelty to somebody or something, and now they are grown up, they are but little better. They can dissect misery and discuss it, and blame the steps that led to it; in fact do anything except feel for it and help it. They may perhaps be just and upright men, but that *something* which draws the unhappy to itself, and makes the miserable feel he can confide his sorrows in its ears, is utterly wanting in their constitution. They are more machines than men, and it is almost a difficult matter of faith to believe that they actually have hearts that beat. Others, although not naturally hard, have become *steeled by selfishness*. In early days selfishness became a besetting sin, and instead of at once flinging the accursed thing aside, they pandered to it until like a hideous serpent it flung its coils around them securing them hand and foot. Far within there is a heart that sometimes feels, but which has no power left to yield to any generous impulse. They are encased and encrusted in themselves. Doubtless many of you have

with the speaker visited the dripping well at Knaresboro' in Yorkshire. The drops as they fall on anything turn it gradually to stone. Hanging above your heads are stone nests, in whose soft beds the mother bird once watched her brood. There are stone handkerchiefs, stone sponges —everything is stone—however soft and flexible it might originally have been. That dripping well petrifies all that comes beneath its influence. Such is a selfishness indulged. It turns the softest heart to stone. Some grow callous by *oft witnessing scenes of suffering and grief*. To live constantly amidst scenes of trial will be sure to produce one of two results — either it will intensify tenfold the compassionate feelings of the heart, or it will breed a stolid indifference. With many it is the former, until at last in very self-defence they are obliged to quit the spot. With others it is the latter, and after a time they can look unmoved on spectacles of grief that would formerly have harrowed every feeling of the soul. Solitary cases of misery are lost in the general. Others become hardened *by enduring trouble themselves*. As in the former case, so in this, bearing trouble will either make the heart more sympathetic or far less. Trials will prove our greatest blessings or our deepest curses. I hardly know a sadder sight than the man devoid of compassion for others because brutalized by his own troubles. Thus, dear friends, you see that from different causes there are some who although they know, yet fail to feel the griefs of others. Hearts that give no echo to the cry for help—natures that take no more impress than the granite rock or icy glacier. Now blessed be His holy name, with Jesus *to know is to be touched*. If His knowledge cuts the channel, His nature at the same moment fills it with the stream of compassionate love. Would you know what Jesus is? Then you have but to find out what Jesus was. Learn the latter, and you know the present, for He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. In this blessed book we have some sweet photographs of the deep compassion ever dwelling in the heart of our Lord. There is one little sentence often occurring in the gospels that seems to me to give a beautiful insight into the workings of Jesus' heart. It is "moved with compassion." Kindly turn with me to just one or two references. The first you will find in Matthew, the ninth chapter and thirty-sixth verse, "but when He saw the multitude He was *moved with compassion* on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." In the same gospel, the fourteenth chapter and fourteenth verse, you will read, "and Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude, and was *moved with compassion* towards them, and He healed their sick." Again we find the same thing in Mark, the first chapter and forty-first verse, but here not in reference to a multitude, but one poor leper: "and there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him and saying unto Him, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean, and Jesus, *moved with compassion*, put forth His hand and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean." How exquisite is that expression, "moved with compassion." He not only felt it, but He was moved by it. All the manhood and deity of our Saviour was agitated by a sight of want or misery. His heart was moved, and then a moved heart moved His hand, for He healed the sick and touched the leper. One day our Saviour was wending His way towards the city of Nain

and as he approached the gates a sad procession met Him. It was a funeral. A young man stricken down in the prime of life was being carried out to be buried. There were many following the corpse, but amongst them one who in a moment became the object of our Lord's attention. It was the mother of the young man, and she a widow. With a heart bursting with anguish she follows the body of her only boy, "And when the Lord saw her, *He had compassion* on her, and said unto her, Weep not." He stops the funeral march, with a word calls back to life the only son, and then with a thoughtful tenderness the evangelist did well to record, "He delivered him to his mother." O loving heart, how quickly touched by a widow's woes ! !

Later on the news is brought to Him that the friend He loved was sick, and now that the friend was dead. Now mark that although Jesus knew what He was going to do, although He saw the raised Lazarus in his sisters' arms, yet the present sorrow, however brief, touched in a moment that tender heart, and "Jesus wept." He could not be but one in the sorrow of His people, however transient He knew that sorrow would be.

Yet once again. With bleeding back and thorn crowned brow He is being hurried to the place of execution. There are brutal shouts of hatred and heavy blows. Surely if ever there was a time when a heart might be expected to be wholly engrossed with its own anguish it was then. But hark! His quick ears have caught the sound of some women's sobs, and turning to them in that hour of darkness and death His compassionate heart forgets itself as He exclaims, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves." The future sorrows of others were more to Him than His own present griefs. *That is what He was.* Believer, He is just the same now. No selfishness has steeled the loving spirit, no gazing upon scenes of sorrow has made that compassionate heart grow callous. Still it is true, "In all our afflictions He is afflicted." He who was moved with compassion at the sight of a hungry and disease stricken multitude—He who had all the sympathy of His nature roused by the sight of a stricken widow—He who mingled His tears with the tears of two bereaved sisters—He abideth the same now. Christ is no unmoved spectator of our trials, but,

"Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother's eye;
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.

In every pang that rends the heart,
The man of sorrows had a part;
He sympathizes in our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief."

III. THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS IS DEEPENED BY EXPERIENCE. This is very beautifully taught in the closing sentence of the verse, "But was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." There can after all be but little true sympathy, however loving the heart, where there has been no similar experience. It is the widow who knows best how to speak words of comfort to the one from whose side an affectionate husband has been torn. It is the man who has himself passed through the agonies of a financial difficulty that knows

best how to cheer the one who, after every desperate effort to retrieve his fortune, yet finds himself going to the wall step by step. It is in the school of experience that the language of sympathy is best taught. How precious is the thought, dear friends, that He who sees all, and He who has a heart to feel all, has also Himself passed through all.

Christ's knowledge of our trials is not a theoretical but an experimental one. He knows what the weight of a burden is by having carried it. He knows what anguish means by having endured it. Unlike the surgeon who only knows what suffering means by having seen it in his walks through the wards of the hospital, Christ knows what it is by having "Himself suffered." Whatever may be your trial this morning, your Saviour passed through it before you. However rough the road you tread, Christ's feet have been lacerated by its broken stones before. What is your trouble? Is it poverty? Does want weary you and privation perplex you? Remember that He said "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Is it depression? Does a heavy weight hang upon the spirit? Is the sky above your head of one dull leaden hue? If so, I can pity you indeed. There is nothing harder to bear than that langour of heart that paralyzes the arm, stupifies the brain and plunges into sore amazement. Yet of Him we read "and He began to be *sore amazed*, and to be very heavy, and saith, my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and being in an *agony* He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Is your trial temptation? Is Satan letting fly at you his fiery arrows in a very cloud? Are you saying "I shall one day fall by the hand of mine enemy? He was "tempted of the devil forty days and forty nights." O mark that lone man as in the dreary wilderness He encounters with His single arm all the powers of darkness.

"But spotless, innocent and pure
The great Redeemer stood,
While Satan's fiery darts He bore,
And did resist to blood."

"But" I can imagine another saying "my trial is of a different kind. I am suffering in spirit from the miserable cowardice of my friends. Just now, when I want them most, I look in vain to find them. When I was prosperous I had so many friends I could hardly count them, but now I am in difficulties it is still harder to reckon them, only from a different cause; they have all gone." Hard indeed, dear friend, is your case, but remember it is recorded of your Saviour's friends, that in the moment of His extremity "they all forsook Him and fled." But from yonder corner of the sanctuary there comes a voice saying "my case is worst of all. I have not merely lost my friend, but the one in whom I most confided, the very one with whom I have walked in company to the house of God has basely betrayed me. I have carried a viper in my breast, and for my kindness he has stung me with his poisonous fang." Sad indeed; but Jesus said "he that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the *same* shall betray Me." It was the one who sat next to Christ and shared the dish with Him that afterwards sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. Some of us doubtless

know what it is to be burdened with the cares of others in addition to our own. So was it with our Saviour, for what was the first thing the disciples did with their own sorrows? "They went and told Jesus." It is a fountain of consolation to know that Jesus sees our sorrows—it is sweeter still to believe that He is touched at the sight—it is sweetest of all to remember that He has felt them all Himself. It s narrated that Charles Pratt, Earl of Camden, when chief justice of common pleas, visited Lord Dacre at Alverly, in Essex one; morning he went out for a stroll in company with a gentleman of a very absent turn of mind; after walking some little distance they reached a hill on which stood the village stocks. The chief justice after sitting upon them awhile, and having a mind to know what the punishment was like, requested his companion to open them and put his feet in; this done, his friend sauntered on with his book, and soon forgot the situation in which he had left the judge. At dinner time there was no small surprise as to what had become of Earl Camden. The absent friend in a moment remembered, and a servant was sent to release the prisoner. Some time after he presided at a trial in which a charge was brought against a magistrate for false imprisonment, and for setting in the stocks. The counsel for the defendant made light of the whole thing, and said "every body knew that setting in the stocks was no punishment whatever." The chief justice rose, and leaning towards him said "brother, have you ever been in the stocks"? "Really my lord, never." "Then I have," said the judge, "and I can assure you that it is no such trifle as you represent." Experience had taught sympathy.

Believer, concerning all your sorrows and difficulties Jesus can say "I have tried them." What should be the effect upon us of this sympathy of Jesus? Surely we have it in the verse following our text, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." The Lord command His blessing upon the word for His Name's sake, AMEN.

Scripture read—Hebrews i and ii.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—146—993—328.

On Thursday, September the 21st, the First Meeting was held in the New Tabernacle. Over 2000 persons were present, and £500 were raised in cash and promises during the evening. The place will be ready for Worship in the early part of next year. It is earnestly desired that another £1000 may be raised before then. Donations will be thankfully received and acknowledged by ARCHIBALD G. BROWN, 17, Bancroft Road, Mile End Road.

The following Sums are gratefully acknowledged:—

A thanks offering	£1	0	0
Messrs. W. & D.	1	1	0
A reader of No. 35	0	2	6
L. (Lynn)	0	1	0
Mrs. G. (Hastings)	5	5	0
P. (Wisbeach)	5	5	0
S. A. B.	5	0	0
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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE REJOICING FOE REBUKED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 22ND, 1871. BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

MICAH vii—8.

FEW if any present are unacquainted with the glorious dream of the Bedfordshire tinker. With most the book has not only been read in the past, but is read still with an ever-increasing relish and delight. Its characters are household names, and its scenes as familiar as our own homes. This being the case I shall not be speaking in any unknown tongue when I use one of the incidents of the book as an introduction to this morning's sermon. You will remember that in the course of his journey, the pilgrim came to a palace named BEAUTIFUL, built by the Lord of the hill for the relief and security of all such who had their faces Zionwards. Here he entered and remained for a few days, delighting himself in the wonders and beauties of the place. His sleeping chamber was a large upper room whose window opened towards the sun rising. The name of the room was PEACE. Anxious however to continue his journey, he bids his kind entertainers farewell. They however refuse to let him go until he has been into the armoury, where they showed him all manner of furniture which their Lord had provided for pilgrims, as sword, shield, helmet, breastplate and shoes that would not wear out. There they harnessed him from head to foot with armour all of proof. Being thus accoutred he walked out of the gate with his friends and commenced going down into the valley of Humiliation. At the bottom of the hill his companions left him, giving him a loaf of bread, a bottle of wine and a cluster of raisins. His valour and armour were soon to be put to the test, for before he had gone any distance he espied a foul fiend coming over the field to meet him. His name was Apollyon. Now was Christian in a strait. To go back was impossible. His heart and vows prohibited the idea; besides which he had no armour for his back, therefore to turn would give his foe the greater advantage. To stand and fight was his only hope. Now, says Bunyan, the monster was hideous to behold. He was clothed with scales like a fish (and they are his pride); he had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion. When he came to Christian he challenged him in scornful language, and claimed him as one of his run-away subjects. Christian answered "I was indeed born in your

dominions, but your service was hard, and your wages such as a man could not live on. I have now let myself to another, even to the King of princes. I have given Him my faith, and sworn my allegiance to Him. Traitor to Him I dare not be. Beware therefore what you do, for I am in the King's highway." Then Apollyon straddled over the whole breadth of the way, and said "prepare to die, for I swear by my infernal den thou shalt go no further; here will I spill thy soul." With that he hurled a flaming dart at Christian which would have stopped him for ever, had he not caught it upon his shield. Thicker came the darts, and in spite of all his carefulness Christian was wounded in his head, his hand and his foot. This sore combat lasted above half the day, and no man can imagine what a hideous roaring Apollyon made all the time of the fight, and what sighs and groans burst from Christian's heart. And now Apollyon watching his opportunity, gathered up close to Christian and hurling him to the ground gave him a dreadful fall, and with that Christian's sword flew out of his hand. "Now I am sure of thee," said Apollyon; and with that almost pressed him to death, so that Christian began to despair of life. But, as God would have it—O mark those words, dear friends, for they are full of sweetest doctrine—while the enemy was fetching his last blow to make an end of this good man, Christian nimbly stretching out his hand caught his sword again, and exclaimed "*Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise.*" With that he gave him a deadly thrust which made him give back, which Christian perceiving, he made at him again, shouting "In all these things we are more than conquerors." Then Apollyon spreading his dragon wings sped away, and Christian saw him no more.

John Bunyan was perfectly warranted in putting the words of our text in the mouth of Christian during his combat with the devil; for although may be they mean literally the Chaldeans or Edmonites rejoicing at the destruction of Jerusalem, yet spiritually they are true of all the foes the church has to encounter on earth, notably, amongst them, "the great adversary." It is with this interpretation we purpose meditating upon them this morning. There are two things in the text which shall serve us for divisions. First, *the rejoicing foe*, and secondly, *the rejoicing foe rebuked.*

I. THE REJOICING FOE. At the moment of conversion, the soul enters upon a conflict which continues until his dying day. The bugle that calls him to peace with God, calls him also to a battle, the sternness of which only those who are engaged in it can understand. Every part of the heavenly panoply is found necessary, and every weapon of the divine armoury required. The combat, unlike Christian's, lasts not only over a half a day, but over the whole life. To hoar hairs, and to the dying room is the fierce struggle continued. The verse with which so many trembling penitents first come to Christ, remains the truthful exponent of their experience ever after—

Just as I am—though toss'd about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within, and fears without.
O Lamb of God, I come.

Over and above the conflicts arising from his own evil heart and the temptations of a godless world, the saint has in satan a sworn foe. The hatred of satan to the saint arises from satan's hatred to the Saviour. John Milton has perhaps hit upon the true cause of heaven's revolt when he attributes it to satan's envy of the Son's position.

> If not the first archangel, great in power,
> In favor and pre-eminence, yet fraught
> With envy against the Son of God, that day
> Honour'd by his great Father, and proclaim'd
> Messiah King anointed, could not bear
> Through pride that sight, and thought himself impair'd.

Vain was the attempt to undermine the eternal throne and overthrow omnipotence. He, with all his compeers, was hurled with speed of lightning flash from heaven's bliss to hell's horror. Raging, he seeks revenge. Where shall he find it? The author of his overthrow is far beyond his reach. Enthroned upon the heights of heaven, the eternal Son is far above his power. No flaming dart of hell can cross the immeasurable space that lies between. No power beneath can shake the massy throne above. But one door is open for revenge. It is to wreak his wrath upon Jehovah's handiwork. It is, being damned himself, to drag a multitude with him to the woe, and harrass those on earth he has no power to destroy in hell. For a season God has in His inscrutable wisdom lengthened the chain that binds this foe. He is still the prince of this world, and knowing that "his time is short," he rages with a fury increasing as his doom comes nearer. Let me beseech you, child of God, to remember that in Satan you have a *personal living foe.* I know that in this so-called philosophical and advanced age even the very devil is called in question with every thing else. According to some, the existence of such a spirit is laughed at as one of the exploded ideas of less scientific and educated periods. It is too unfashionable and repulsive a doctrine to suit the latent atheism of the élite of modern theologians. The being of the devil is diluted into mere unembodied evil. Choosing, however, to accept the positive declarations of scripture before the day-dreams of modern teachers, we believe in the language of Arthur Butler, that "it is a living spirit with whom we have to contend, as it is a living God whom we have to aid us. It is no abstract law or ideal conception of evil as some have dared to theorise, but a being personal and conscious, and distinctively active as ourselves, though with faculties immeasurably beyond us; a being profound in purpose, subtle in arrangement, bold in enterprise, undaunted in execution; a being who knows us far better than we know ourselves, and hates us more intensely than even his worst inspirations have instigated us to hate one another."

In order to form some idea of the foe we have to fight, let us look at a few of the names given him by the Holy Ghost in scripture. These best reveal his character. Out of many names we will but select a few. Kindly turn with me to the book of Revelation, the ninth chapter, and eleventh verse, there you read "and they had a king

over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon," that is to say *Destroyer*. How faithfully does the word describe what he has ever been. We have but to turn to earth, or man, or soul, or any home, to see the footprint of the destroyer. Destruction dogs his steps. Fair was Eden beyond description before his accursed foot trod its virgin soil. But under the baneful influence of the sin he brought, thorns and briars sprang up in tangled thickets, and to this day "the whole creation groaneth." Before the destroyer came the leopard used to lie down with the lamb, and the lion with the ox. It was the lion of the pit breathed into brute creation the lust for blood, and made the strong oppress and tear the weak. His mark is also seen on man. Perfect was the body, pure and clear the mind of man as he came from his Maker's hand—God's masterpiece. But how changed by the destroyer's power. Sickness, pain, agony and the seeds of death; these are the things that shatter the beauty of the soul's temple; and the mind once pure as crystal or mountain lake, is now defiled, and often totters to its fall. More dreadful still is the destruction of the soul alienated from its God; and a myriad homes this morning filled with wrath, and bitterness, and strife—a mockery of the very name of home—declare in heart-breaking accents that the devil is a destroyer. Another name given him in scripture is Satan or Accuser. In the twelfth chapter of Revelation, and the tenth verse, you read "Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ; for the *accuser* of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." In this title the Holy Ghost gives us another side of our adversary's character. He commenced his attack upon our first parents by accusing God before them, and representing Him as one harsh and unnecessarily severe in His threatenings of wrath against their disobedience. Having led man into sin, he then turns round and becomes his accuser before God. Double-dyed accuser is he; equally accusing God to man, and man to God. It was he who mingling with the sons of God, laughed to scorn the integrity of Job in those bitter words "Doth Job fear God for naught? Put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." It was he who stood accusing Joshua, the high priest, and unto whom the Lord said "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" But perhaps the intensity of his hatred is most seen in the fact that he accuses man of the very sins he has dragged him into. This is worthy only of the devil. Having led the miserable wretch from vice to vice, and allured him on to every crime, he then holds those very sins before his eyes, and seeks with them to lash him into deepest and darkest despair. Yet one other name, and that a name given him by our Lord. The most dreadful name of all—Murderer. You will find it in the gospel of St. John, the eighth chapter, and forty-fourth verse "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a *murderer* from the beginning."

Murderer! The very word seems to have a red glow of blood about it. It was he who goaded guilty Cain on to the crime. He it was who revelled in that horrid sight of brother slain by brother. From that time down unto the present, scenes of murder and of bloodshed have turned this world into a slaughter-house. "From whence came wars"? "Even of your lusts," is the answer. Whence came these lusts? "Resist the devil," is the answer of James. Yes, all the wars that have desolated countries, made wives widows, and children orphans, have come from him, who was a murderer from the beginning. Of all hellish sights a battle field has most of hell. There, above all other places, does the Murderer career in triumph. Shame to England is it that one of her *Bishops* should be found—as he was the other day—extenuating the crime and talking of the God of love by the heathen title of the God of battles. The bishop may not be as "mawkish" as some who sicken at the thought of war, nor is the devil either, A field reeking with gore, and covered thick with maimed and ghastly corpses, while a stench like that of hell ascends to heaven, is the devil's masterpiece on earth. Now this foe, who is at once destroyer, accuser and murderer, is the one who "goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Not satisfied with the world that still lieth in his arms, he lusts after the sheep of Christ's fold. His infernal appetite is ever craving fresh victims. Unable to do all he would against the saint, he yet seeks to do all he can. As nothing is too huge for his wrath, so nothing is too small for his spite. If he cannot damn, he will fill with doubts. If not destroy, he will seek to worry. If not keep out of heaven, he will make the road as difficult as possible. If he dare not bite, he will never cease to bark. So bold is he that even when the lion of Judah was with His chosen ones he dared approach and seek a prize. Blessed be our Keeper who never slumbereth, He saw the foe, and gave the warning, "Simon, satan has desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Dogging the steps of every saint is this implacable foe, seeking to blast his character, destroy his peace and gag the mouth of his testimony. Let us not despise him, for alas, he often does succeed in hurling the christian to the ground. Sometimes *unawares*. In an unexpected moment, when the path seems the clearest from all ambushes, and the christian is walking in unwatchful security, then does the foe spring upon his back, and before he has time to turn, or cry, or fight, or fly, he finds himself upon the ground. From the most unsuspected quarter, and at the most unlikely time the temptation has come. Like a storm that breaks without a moment's warning, it has taken him all unawares, and for years he may repent the fall of a moment. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," for the serpent of hell springs no rattle before he crushes his victims within his coils. Not only does he come unawares, but he ever assaults *our weakest part*. No christian is equally strong in every part; all have some besetting sin that requires but little temptation to call it forth. No one knows this better than the devil. He has studied our characters as we have never studied them ourselves. Every flaw in our armour is

seen by his keen eye, and on that weakest part he brings all his power to bear. Be certain of this, Christian, that whatever temptation you are most likely to succumb under is the very one he will employ in its most attractive form. Then when he has succeeded in making the Christian bite the dust, great is his rejoicing. Satan knows full well that the fall of one professor does more harm to the cause of Christ than all the opposition of its open foes. The wound received by Christ in the house of his friends is the worst wound of all. Most jubilant is the enemy if the fallen one should be a minister of the Lord. Here is a triumph indeed. The standard bearer is down, and dismay fills the ranks of the host. It is a fall that attracts more attention and does more injury than the fall of a dozen less known men. "Howl, fir tree, for the cedar is fallen." Mourn, church of God, for hell is making merry over your prostrate warrior. Assuredly they who stand in the high places of the field need the prayers of all, for in proportion to the influence of their fall will be the attacks of the devil. But known or unknown, noted or unnoticed, a christian in the dust is ever a gleeful sight to the adversary. As it is with the "prince of the world," so it is with his followers. A disgraced professor is one of the world's greatest luxuries. Let but a christian be discovered in some inconsistency, and at once it is the "news of the day." With what laughter and malicious glee it is bandied about. How it is knocked aroud from mouth to ear like a shuttle-cock. What "an excellent joke" it makes at the club or evening party. How it is used to barb every shaft of sarcasm, and "spice" the conversation that would otherwise be dull. "Aha, Aha, so would we have it," they cry "another professor gone to the dogs—another of your christians turned out a counterfeit." Perhaps the sins of the brother was not one tithe as bad as the sins of his merciless critics. Never mind—he was a professor, and that is quite enough; and if the sin was not very great at the commencement, it is sure to grow to the required dimensions as it flies from eager teller to willing listener. A more piteous sight can hardly be imagined than a godless world, gloating with satanic satisfaction over a christian's sin. So much then for our first point, on which we have dwelt longer than we intended. Let us now turn to a more pleasing theme.

II. THE REJOICING FOR REBUKED. Do you notice, dear friends, that in our text there is no attempt to deny the fact of the fall or excuse its guilt. Out upon those professors, and shame to them, who join with the laughter of the world, and say, "'tis nothing." Who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and the liberty of the children of God into a license for sin. With them we have nothing to do this morning, except wash our hands of them, and confess they are "spots" in our feast. Equally would we condemn those who, if not denying the fact of their fall, yet seek to palliate and excuse it by a thousand different reasons, all equally false and dishonourable. No! the true christian as fully acknowledges the fall as the world charges him with it, As to making any excuse, he could not if he tried. He knows that his fall *is* a triumph for Satan. He confesses with tears that it is a dishonour to Christ. His mourning is as great, yea greater

than the foe's rejoicing. O, believe me when I say there is no need to deal very harshly with a backsliding saint. He says harder things about himself than you can possibly utter. He flogs himself with a worse scourge than your hands can grasp. Hard on him? No need; he is harder on himself. God only knows the anguish of the heart that mourns a fall. A red-hot ploughshare is driving its furrows across his soul; and could you see him in private as with wringing hands, and scalding tears, he confesses over and over again his guilt, you would learn the truth of the text, "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." Backsliding brings its own punishment, and becomes its own tormentor. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the *spirit of meekness*, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." From whence then does the fallen christian obtain his comfort, if it be not in ignoring the past? The text gives the answer to the question. *He rejoices in the thought of restoration.* The future is his reservoir of gladness. "I am down," he says, "and mourn the fact, but O, enemy of my Lord and mine, I shall arise. Thou hast cast me to the ground I know, but it is beyond thy power to keep me there. Thy hold shall be released. My hand shall again wield the sword, and thy dragon wings shall yet flap in flight. My present darkness shall give place to dawn, for 'the Lord shall be a light unto me.' I shall arise a *wiser* man. I have learnt more of thy subtleness, O enemy, and more of my own weakness—I have learnt more of the value of the joy of God's salvation, and more of the bitterness of sin than I ever knew before—I have learnt the necessity of prayerfulness as I should never have learnt it in any school but thine. Once through this furnace, and my gold shall glitter, purged from its previous dross. I shall arise a more *watchful* man. I shall look for thine approach as I have never looked before. I shall be 'all eyes' for thee, and no longer walk in the fool's paradise of careless security. O, enemy, I shall arise and have thee at advantage, being no longer ignorant of thy devices. I shall arise a *humbler* man. No longer resting on my own unided strength I shall fight thee under the wing of Jehovah. The plume of my pride being cut, I shall see the better for its loss." These are the thoughts that make the prostrate warrior pluck up fresh heart and hurl a new defiance at his foe.

It is indeed beloved a glorious thought that though God's children may and do fall, yet they shall be restored. That verse is ever true "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "But" I can imagine one saying "what is to be said of those professors who, turning back to the world, die in that state, without any sign of restoration?" My answer is, their end proves the falseness of their profession. They have gone back to their wallowing in the mire, having never had within them the new nature born of the Holy Ghost.

God's true saints shall be raised up from the ground, however hard their fall. Moses fell when in wrath he said, "ye rebels, shall we fetch you water." He had his punishment in never entering into the

promised land. He had his restoration also. Though dying for his sin on Nebo's height, God buries his favorite servant with His own hand. David fell when Satan hurled him to the ground as he walked upon his palace roof. Never was greater fall. But with broken bones the psalmist pens that fifty-first psalm—the prayer of penitent backsliders in all ages since—and the Lord sent to him and said, "I have put away thy sin." He dies "the man after God's own heart." Peter fell when he denied his Lord with oaths and curses, but Peter arose by grace and became the boldest of the bold in future testimony. Cranmer fell when he signed the article of recantation, but he arose when in the flames he held his right hand motionless until the sinews cracked, exclaiming, "this unworthy right hand," so long as his voice would suffer him. Are there not many here this morning who can look back upon a time of darkness with deepest grief, and yet amidst their grief rejoice, because though fallen they have by grace arisen, and once again rejoice in pardoning love. Next to the salvation of the sinner, the recovery of the saint brings glory to our Lord. Lift up then the hands that hang down. Bid unbelief and black despair depart. Though like Bunyan's pilgrim you lie bruised and panting with your fall, yet like him stretch forth the hand, grasp the sword, fly at the foe once more, and shout, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me." God bless the word for Christ's sake, AMEN.

Scripture read—Psalm xxxvii.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—906—743—35, Part I.

Will every Reader kindly help us in the rearing of our New Tabernacle. We hope to enter into it during the first quarter of the new year. About £4000 is required to enter it free of debt.

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
17, Bancroft Road, Mile End Road, E.

The following Sums are gratefully acknowledged:—

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

OLD LANDMARKS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 5TH, 1871, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set."
PROVERBS xxii—28.

EVERY age has its distinguishing character and mark. Some have been martial above everything else, and the pages of their history might appropriately be written in blood, and illustrated by battle scenes. Others may be truthfully described as "scientific," and some few as "profligate." The present age I am inclined to catalogue as "radical." On every hand there has arisen a bold and defiant spirit of inquiry. Veneration for anything is at a discount. The oldest theories are now put to the most searching tests, and things that were looked upon with something akin to pious awe by our forefathers are now freely handled, and often with laughter. Old landmarks are being most unceremoniously shifted into remote corners, or else improved off the face of the earth entirely. This spirit pervades the political, scientific, and religious worlds alike, and in all three its reckless boldness seems upon the increase. That I am not prepared to condemn this spirit in unmeasured terms most of you know. I have not one atom of sympathy with those who venerate everything that happens to be old. The very fact that some things have been permitted to grow old is cause for shame, and only increases my antagonism to their existence. An old error is the worst error of all, and though there may have grown around it associations and traditions linking it with the history of past ages, I yet say "down with it." Its hoary locks call for condemnation, not compassion. But whilst recognising the serviceable element in radicalism, I am convinced that, like fire, it makes a good servant, but a bad and mad master. Kept within proper restraints it will cure many things; unrestrained it will curse everything. The fire behind the bars is a source of comfort and delight, but scattered broadcast it leads to a Chicago conflagration. In moderation this spirit serves as a timely preservative against the chilling influences of conservatism, pure and simple, but let it once pass beyond reasonable bounds and the danger of the fire is greater than that of the frost. France has found it so to her cost. But it is not upon political landmarks I purpose speaking this evening. It is upon scriptural. These are threatened as much, perhaps more, than any other. Not content to work in its own lawful sphere, the spirit that is now abroad impiously puts its hand upon the declarations of inspired writ, and as coolly proposes to shift or remove

them as if they were so many conclusions of men who living in early days knew no better. Against this we do and will protest with all the power that God has given us. There can be no parallel drawn between scripture truths and political or scientific matters. The latter are the outgrowth of man's ideas and are therefore capable of improvement, the former are the thoughts of infinite wisdom and the utterances of one who knows no change. The latter are but repeated experiments, the former declared truths and divine facts. When man ventures to tamper with these he puts his hands upon things entirely and utterly beyond his province. I need hardly say that I am not going to teach from the text that we are bound to accept as binding all landmarks raised even by the best of men. Many a present landmark has no better reason for its continuance than "ancient custom," or "our fathers respected it." No, this night we speak only of those landmarks planted by God, through his prophets, Son and apostles. Those landmarks that have deeply engraved upon their front "thus saith the Lord." We shall divide our subject into two parts, as follows. First, *look at some landmarks that are threatened,* and secondly *bring to the front a few reasons why they should be left as they stand.*

I. NOTICE SOME OF THE LANDMARKS THREATENED. I shall divide these landmarks into two classes, namely, those of doctrine and christian life. First then those of *doctrine.* According to the new standard of orthodoxy it is almost heterodox to have any doctrine at all. All clearly defined views are but a proof of simplicity and ignorance, and dogmatic teaching is an irrefutable evidence of shallowness of brain. To be thoroughly intellectual you must be certain of nothing, and hold all your views but *pro tem.* Your theology, if you have any, must be of the molluscan type, devoid of all backbone and capable of being twisted into any shape—something soft and flabby that can hurt the feelings of no one. Anything more than this will bring the sneer of "puritan." Strange thing indeed and lamentable as an evidence of where we have got to, that the word "puritan" should ever be uttered with any other feeling than that of profound respect. These were the men who among general superstition yet held the truth, and were willing to lose everything, even life itself, to maintain the integrity of their faith. These were the men who were loyal to Christ even to poverty and prison.

It is enough to make the blood boil with indignation to hear these grand old men spoken of in tones of sneering pity by miniature men not worthy, in intellectual wealth, to tie their shoe strings. Truly, "there were giants in those days." Doubtless, their sermons were rather long and divided into almost innumerable parts, but then there was *something in them* to divide, which is more than can be said of the productions of their self-elected critics. Doctrine with them meant something, and we pray "God give the church in this respect a new race of puritans." The present feeling of many was doubtless truthfully expressed by a minister who said to me not long since, "O bother doctrine, we have done with that now." The old landmarks seem by many to be only useful as *tests for agility.* With a smile of great complacency they tell you the many they have suc-

ceeded in vaulting; whilst a semi-religious paper has the audacity to say that the only places crowded and prosperous are those that have ministers who have leaped over the traces of old-fashioned orthodoxy.

I purpose now, by God's help, to take you with me round the frontier—show you the landmarks planted there by His hand, and ask you to read the different inscriptions engraved upon them. For a reason I shall hereafter explain, I shall be particularly careful to keep close to the actual words of scripture. The landmarks I shall select will be those that can only be slighted at the peril of the soul. I select them, not because I think it likely there are many if any present, who despise them, but on the principle of "forewarned, forearmed." The first is *the Deity of Christ.* This landmark is high and massive, with many an inscription indelibly written upon it. Let us read them, and I ask everyone who has a bible to turn with me to the different passages mentioned. We want to night to have God's truth in His own words. In Matthew, the first chapter and twenty-third verse, it is declared "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel, which being interpreted is *God* with us." In John, the first chapter and first verse, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, *and the Word* WAS *God.*" In the tenth chapter of the same gospel, and the thirtieth verse, you have Christ's own solemn declaration, "I and my Father are one." In Romans, nine and five, "Where the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, *God blessed for ever.* Amen." Colossians, two and nine, "For in Him dwelleth all the *fulness of the Godhead* bodily." Lastly, in the first of Timothy, the third chapter and sixteenth verse, we have those noble words "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: *God was manifest in the flesh,* justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." These are but a few declarations culled from the many; but they are sufficient. In tones that can only be wilfully misunderstood they proclaim the fact that He who was born in the manger—who taught in the streets—bled in Gethsemane—died at Calvary, was very God. Not a mere man with God with Him, but God Himself veiled in flesh.

Beloved friends, the deity of Christ is no doctrine that can be accepted or rejected at pleasure. It is no mere "non-essential"—a term I much object to—which may be held or cast aside without peril to the soul. If this landmark goes, everything goes with it; or to change the figure, this doctrine is the foundation of the entire temple of salvation, remove it and every hope we have for eternity comes falling about our ears. Believe everything else in the bible but the divinity of Jesus and you believe a collection of impossibilities. Apart from this, the atonement is meaningless, the blood powerless, the intercession valueless.

Much might be said upon this point, but time forbids; I therefore simply entreat you by your loyalty to Christ, and by every hope you have of heaven to stand by this glorious landmark and reckon every hand that touches it as guilty of a higher treason than ever hell dared breathe, for even the devils said "we know Thee who Thou art the Son of God."

The second doctrinal landmark I would lead you to is *salvation by atonement.* This is a landmark stained with blood. Many are the declarations engraved upon it. Let us read a few. There is one marked Matthew twenty-six and twenty-eight. It runs thus, "this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many *for the remission of sins.* Another, Romans four and twenty-five, "who was delivered *for our offences,* and was raised again for our justification." Another, Galatians, three and thirteen, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made *a curse for us*; for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." Surely if words teach anything plainly, these teach the momentous fact that our salvation is one procured by blood. Satisfaction made by a substitute, and that substitute a dying one, could not be more distinctly stated.

This truth is the pith and marrow of the gospel. It is *the* "good news." Christ in the sinner's place, bearing the sinner's sins and enduring the sinner's punishment. Pardon bought with blood. Peace brought by the cross. Life by a Saviour's death. Bold must be the hands that dare shift this awful landmark of Jehovah. Yet they are found. Words have been uttered concerning the doctrine of atonement so full of blasphemy that we cannot force our lips to repeat them here. The blood of the everlasting covenant has been accounted an unholy thing and trodden under foot. And where no syllable is breathed against it, yet is it often despised by silence. Is there no preaching of salvation by the virtue of morality? No putting of repentance and sacraments in the holy place of atonement? "Yes" be it said with shame, and by those that call themselves the preachers of the cross. O, members of this church and ye who love the Lord in every place, I charge you revere this landmark set up from before the foundation of the world. In solitary grandeur let this truth stand forth, both in heart and word, SALVATION BY BLOOD ALONE.

The third doctrinal landmark I point you to, is *the necessity of regeneration.* Inscribed upon it are the words in John, third chapter and the third verse "Jesus said, verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be *born again,* he cannot enter the kingdom of God." This doctrine is one that had need be kept in the front and constantly preached, for the professing church seems apt to forget it. It was the declaration of this truth by George Whitefield, that shook England from shore to shore. It was sustaining the doctrine of the Reformation on this subject that gave him half his power. Would to God that there were a hundred Whitefields now, declaring in trumpet tones, that conversion is no improvement of the old nature but the implantation of a new, not an old man altered but a new man born. Remember this landmark fellow-labourers for the Lord, and whether your work lies among the children or adults, bring them face to face with this great "except." Remember that however moral, pure and educated a man may be, there is as great necessity for his regeneration as for the vilest and most openly depraved. One other doctrinal landmark and I close this portion of our subject. It is *the eternal ruin consequent upon rejection of Christ.* With solemn hearts let us read the words of warning written. "He that believeth not shall be damned." "They shall go

away into everlasting punishment." "Their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." This landmark has been assailed more fiercely than any other, some are for doing away with it altogether, others for abolishing its eternity. Some argue that its fires refine and prepare for after bliss, others that its fires destroy to annihilation. It is enough for me to know that scripture reveals a Hell, but reveals no termination of its woe, nor even hints at restoration. The answer put by our Lord into the mouth of Abraham to the rich man in hell shuts the door against such hope. "And beside all this between us and you there is a great gulf *fixed*: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." These are a few of the great doctrinal landmarks of scripture, beware lest ye be tempted to remove them. There are many others we have no time to dwell upon, which if less momentous in their subjects, are equally of God. It is not for us to spurn the smallest boundary stone of doctrine, nor cross one step beyond the frontier line. All work for God must be done within the area He has marked. "But" it is objected, "if you keep to these old-fashioned truths you will lose the ear of the public." Would it not be better to let a few landmarks go, and by meeting the popular taste, secure its sympathy and attendance? Without for one moment believing in the danger hinted, I deliberately declare before God that *I would rather preach in a half empty place—keeping within God's boundary marks—than draw the greatest crowd by the smallest compromise of truth.* The preacher's mission is to declare what the Lord saith, let the consequences be what they may. Results are God's, obedience is ours.

Secondly. Let us now turn *to the landmarks of christian life.* Laxity in doctrine is certain to result in laxity of life. It has done so in the present day. I state, without any fear of refutation. that the religious life of the professing church, taken as a whole, is at a miserably low ebb. The old standard has been lowered to enable modern dwarfs to pass muster. Anything like a life of "dead to the world" is laughed at as "narrow-minded—bigoted—canting." If Paul was to rise from the dead and be introduced to many of the members of our churches, he would be marvellously surprised to see the practical commentary given to his epistles. He would find that being "crucified to the world," and having the "world crucified" to us, means something very different now to what it did when he penned the words. He would be told that the old hard and fast lines had been obliterated as an insult to the intelligence of the age, and that going "to meet" the world was a modern improvement on coming out of it. Let us however turn to the word and testimony, and see what are the landmarks deciding our *nonconformity to the world.* You will find the first in John, the seventeenth chapter, from the fourteenth verse, "They are not of the world, *even* as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them *from* the evil. They are not of the world even as I am not of the world."

Look at John, the first epistle, second chapter, fifteenth verse, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. *If*

any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Once more, and this reference comes with peculiar power to members of a Baptist Church. Turn to Romans six and three, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." In these verses you have the old landmarks of christian life. How do we stand in relation to them? Where are the Christs in our churches? I use this expression with reverence, and I believe in accordance with scripture. Where are the men of whom Jesus could say they are not of the world *even* as I am not of the world? Where the anointed ones only caring for the world in order to reclaim it? Where the Christly ones living separated lives from the world's joys, but weeping over the world's sins? Where the men, who like Christ, are living "without the camp."? Thank God there are many, but they are almost lost to view in the masses of the semi-worldly professors. Where are our dead men? Men who care no more for the world's maxims and pleasures than a corpse, but are daily living a resurrection life with Christ? There are such, but would to God they were multiplied a thousand fold. How would our churches be decimated if all those who evince a love to the world were excluded as wanting the love of the Father. Brethren, let us not seek to lower the standard because we fail to reach its height, but rather let us cry unto the Lord mightily to make us the type of christian described upon these landmarks. It is time to shout in the ears of the church, "Back, back to primitive nonconformity, ye have forsaken the old paths!! We want to see this nonconformity displayed in spirit and conversation, for should it bring the sneer of "psalm-singing saint," it would be an evidence we were living in the atmosphere recommended by Paul "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." We want to see it in integrity of life. Refusing to stoop to the world's paltry tricks of trade. We want even to see it in the very *dress* of the Christian. I know that here I am treading upon delicate ground, but bear with me, sisters in Christ, when I say, that although recommending no distinguishing garb as the followers of George Fox, I yet believe that there should be the manifestation of a sanctified spirit in the neatness and simplicity of your attire. To Christian young men I say the same. There is another landmark of Christian life I wish for a moment to remind you. It is *self-denial*. The inscription runs thus:— "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." I fear this landmark is more slighted than any other. The age has become effeminate and self-indulgent, and a religion that makes much sacrifice is hard to be found. This is not to be wondered at, for it now requires so little courage to profess, that half-hearted ones come within the borders of the church who would never have thought of taking the name of Christian in the early ages. Then it meant something to declare yourself for Christ. Poverty and reproach with probable torture and martyrdom confronted the early professor.

This kept the church pure, and frightened from her ranks all save those who were willing to sacrifice and be sacrificed for the truth. But how is it now? Are the churches of the present day composed of men who resolutely place the things of Christ before their own affairs, and willingly deny themselves for the honour of Christ and His cause? But one answer can be given—no they are not. Time cannot now be spared, where life-blood was spilt before. A few shillings are now thought as great a sacrifice as a fortune and life in those early days. Let it be clearly understood that I do not say there are none such in the church at the present time. I rejoice to believe there are as bright and self-denying saints now as in any age; but they are isolated and exceptional cases. The *general* aspect of the church is self-indulgent to an extreme. The services and worship of the church are to multitudes admirable things, *so long as they entail no privation and no loss.* I believe, that as a church, we have more spiritual life than most, and yet, on looking round, I can see those who have not been to five prayer meetings in five years. Why not? The real answer is—because there has been no willingness to make any sacrifice in order to come. Beloved friends, God knows that I say these words in no spirit of bitterness, but of grief, and only that I may be faithful with you. The standard is not mine, but my Lord's. The landmark is not man's, but Christ's. O read its inscription over and over again, and pray God to raise you to its height of consecration and self-denial. Thus have I tried to notice some of the great landmarks of scripture. Why are many seeking to remove them? I can answer the question in very few words. Their removal is sought because they are galling to pride, and because they demand a higher life and deeper devotion than this age of worldly christianity is prepared to give. So much for our first point. Let us now, for a few moments, only pass to the second.

II. A FEW REASONS WHY THESE LANDMARKS SHOULD BE LEFT. First, *because God put them there.* You will remember that I said at the commencement of the sermon I had a particular reason for wishing to give you God's truth in His own words. It was that I might be able to say to you as I do now, that all the landmarks of to-night are the Lord's. I have simply led you to them, and read, in your hearing, their inscriptions. Now surely loyalty to Him, as King, forbids our tampering with them, and affection to Him, as a Father, says "respect them." Suppose some of these landmarks do put my pride in the dust, and condemn my previous life as unworthy of Him. Shall I refuse to acknowledge them on that account? He who is willing to save may surely say how He will save, and He who made me a christian has a right to say what kind of a christian He expects me to be. Besides which, remember He has committed these truths to us as a sacred trust, and we are devoid of every spark of honour if we accept aught in their place. What would you think of a son who having a family heirloom intrusted to his care by a dying father, should soon after that father's death let the heirloom go to the pawnbroker, that he might wear some modern flashy jewellery? You would cry "shame" to him, and refuse to accept as any excuse "that

the thing was old-fashioned." So with the truths we have been meditating upon this evening. They are the Lord's but committed to our keeping. Remove them not.

They are moreover *the ramparts of the church.* The doctrinal landmarks I have taken you to this evening are the church's "lines of defence." Let one go, and you imperil the next. Surrender one to the foe, and you give him a vantage ground that leaves the rest of little value. Let these truths be maintained, and his fiercest onsets can avail naught. Let them once be abandoned, and his road is open. Whilst the doctrinal landmarks are the lines of defence, the landmarks of christian character are our power for assault. O when God's children rise to His standand of nonconformity and self-denial, then shall the church be well-nigh omnipotent, but not before. Her worldliness is her weakness. I will only mention two other reasons. They *are the foundations of all true happiness, and the men who have most faithfully stood by them, and most humbly paid homage to them, have been the men who have been the glory of the church.* Let modern infidelity say what it will about the old-fashioned truths of Scripture unsuited to human thought, the fact yet remains, that those most honoured of God and most successful in reaching the masses, have been those who have most rigidly kept within the landmarks of to-night. Long after all the flimsy cobwebs of human speculation have broken down by the weight of their own dust, the faith once delivered to the saints shall remain "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The Lord raise up a generation of bold defenders for the old landmarks.

The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar
Who follows in His train?

A glorious band, the chosen few,
On whom the Spirit came;
Twelve valiant saints, their hope they knew,
And mocked the cross and shame.

A noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice
In robes of light arrayed.

They climb'd the steep ascent of heaven,
Through peril, toil, and pain;
O God, to us may grace be given.
To follow in their train.

Scripture read—Ephesians vi.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—486—457—670.

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1871 AND 1872.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 31ST, 1871, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"He thanked God and took courage."—ACTS xxviii– 15.

THROUGH the infinite mercy of God, our eyes this morning behold the light of the closing day of another year. Eighteen-hundred-and-seventy-one will have run its course in a few hours, and if God spares us we hope to greet with song "another year." There is something wonderfully solemn in thus passing these milestones on the road of life. They compel thought in the most careless, and the whole world seems hushed as with measured step it draws near the boundary line—crosses it—then leaves it in the rear. It is in these seasons we realize the power and pace of time. How resistless is its course, never for a moment halting or slackening in its forward march. Whether we wake or sleep, work or rest, live or die, *it* moveth on the same. For the one to whom it bringeth liberty it hastens not its step, nor for the wretch condemned to die does it become tardy. Ignoring all respect of persons, it deals alike with prince and pauper. All are hurried on by its waveless tide at equal rate. Exception none it makes. Like the God who gave it birth, and shall decree its death, "none can stay its hand or say 'what doest thou'?" Willing or unwilling, with brightening hope or deeping gloom, all are swept along. Remarkable as its might, is its speed, and not more remarkable than deceptive. Marked by its shorter courses time appears slow of step. How long is often the minute of suspense! How never-ending seem the sleepless hours of the night! How slow it creeps to the watchers of the sick and dying! But take time, not by the minute or the hour, but by the day, and how accelerated does its speed become. We seem always rising, or retiring to our rest. Measure it by the week, and it is quicker still. How short the interval between the days of worship. Reckon it by the month, and we find it runs. Note it by the year, and we find it flies. Bear me witness, friends, that it seemeth but the other day when we watched the past year gently die, and hailed with holy hymn the birth of this. As we stood upon the threshold of the present year, far away in the distance seemed its close, but lo! it has arrived, and the months of work and anxiety, joy and grief, are at an end, and we reckon its life by the hour. With what feelings shall we close one year and anticipate another? "Mingled" will be the answer of all. Self-reproach will blend with adoring gratitude and joy contend with sorrow. Our experience will depend upon the view we take. If we look upon it as

God's year, praise, and only praise, will be our employ. If we regard it as our own year, shame, and only shame, can be the result. The latter view is perhaps best taken in moments of private meditation. There are many matters for humiliation that are best for secret confession and repentance, and would ill suit public worship. Let us alone review our year, but together commemorate God's year with us. The text I have selected, expresses I think in the happiest terms, the feelings with which we should look back upon 1871, and look forward to 1872. With thankfulness and courage. The words were uttered under the following circumstances:—Paul was being taken to Rome as a prisoner. The journey was made by sea as far as Puteoli, where on landing he was greeted by many of the brethren, and through the courtesy of Julius the centurion allowed to remain some few days. From thence they continued the journey on foot. The news of Paul's approach preceded him, and the church of Christ at Rome determined to send a deputation to meet and welcome him. Part met him at Appii Forum, and part at the Three Taverns, both of these being towns that lay in the Appian Way to Rome. This act of kindness greatly cheered the apostle, so he thanked God and took courage for the future that yet was shrouded in darkness, save that he knew that "bonds and imprisonment awaited him." Let us now, by God's help, make the apostle's words our own, and first

I. LET US THANK GOD FOR EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-ONE. Here a difficulty meets us at the very outset; a difficulty not arising from want of matter but from superabundance of material. Thank God for the past year? Where shall we begin and where shall we leave off? If the mercies of one day exceed our thought and imagination, how then shall we include a year in our grateful remembrance?

To sing a worthy song, even if we were able, upon every kind of blessing received would require all our time, yea, eternity itself. We shall therefore be able but to touch each string in the great harp, and trust that it will quiver and vibrate with melody long after this morning's service is concluded. Should we not thank God *that our lives have been preserved another year*. I fear that the mercy of spared life is much overlooked. So continuously are the moments given, that we grow prone to look upon ourselves more as freeholders than tenants at will. All men expect to live, but few to die. We form our plans for weeks and months ahead, as if no sudden stoppage of the machinery of life was within the range of possibility. But let us pause and think. During the year so nearly closed, tens of thousands have fought the last battle and been laid in the dust. They entered upon it with as little expectation of it being their dying year as we did. To them the months spread out as full of expectation as to us. But all was shadowed in a moment. With scarce a warning, the King of Terrors stood before them. Not life but death their portion. Before his glittering axe they fell, and with them a thousand hopes and plans for future happiness. We are spared, and on the last day of the year we are enabled to review its months. O, matchless mercy and long suffering grace!! Throughout another year the pendulum of life has given

its noiseless beats. Throughout another year the pulse has throbbed without a pause. Throughout another year the silver cord has borne the strain, and the sleep of night has ended in the light of day. Is this no mercy? Shall God have no praise, and we accept it without a song? Surely not.

"Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long."

During the present year every ticking second has been the last on earth to some one, yet out of the well nigh countless number who have fallen, we have been exempted. Brethren and Sisters, for hearts that beat and eyes that see this day, let us thank God. But here many of us may add a note, and lift the strain yet higher. Not only has life been spared, but *health enjoyed.* To multitudes this year has been a living death; yea, death itself has often been desired as a friend. Unto them has been appointed days of pain and nights of weariness. Slowly have the months dragged along, only noticed and remembered by varying intensity of suffering. Life to such has been robbed of its charm. All one to them the freshness of the Spring—the glory of the Summer—or the changing tints of Autumn time. One room has contained all the views they have seen this year, and their only "change" has been to turn upon the bed. I could mention some, even of our own number, who commencing this year in sickness, are still found upon its closing day as prostrate as at first. Still, at morning are they saying, "Would it were evening," and at evening sighing, "Would God it were morning." Not so has it been with us. Passing pains and transient sickness may have fallen to our share, but most of them are now forgotten. They were but noticed through their contrast with our general days. How few Sabbaths have many of us lost through sickness; not half so many as we have by our soul's worldliness. Thank God then, that not only has the life current flowed, but that it has flowed strongly. Joyously and free from pain has the complex mechanism of this wondrous frame performed its work another year. Bless God for health, it is His choicest earthly gift. Another note will here blend in harmony, namely, *prosperity granted.* Not only has there been the strength to work, but there has been the work to employ the strength. Perhaps the year was entered with many a dark foreboding thought. Dismal scenes were conjured up that had well nigh the power of reality in their depressing influence. You saw the shop closed, the business ruined, and yourself and family face to face with want or eating the unsavoury bread of charity. Difficulties seemed closing around you, and you prophecied that this year the storm must burst. Well, how is it now? Far better than your brightest hopes, and a very contrast to your darkest fears. God has been to you JEHOVAH JIREH. Though often in straits you have been helped through them all, and though no great luxuries have crowned your table, yet has it never lacked the meal at the appointed hour. Though far from wealthy, you find you can spare something for the poorer brethren, and give your little to the work of God. Let us seek, dear friends, to have quick eyes in discerning the Lord's hand in our so-called "every day mercies." The smallest comfort grows great in value

when viewed as our Father's gift. The next string I shall touch has sweet music of its own, and should call forth the deepest "thank God" from every breast. It is *home mercy*. Home! Home!! Surely, among all the gifts of heaven, there is none more passing beautiful, or more worthy of our grateful praise, than a home where kindness, love and cheerfulness abide. It has been well said, that to Adam, Paradise was home, and to the holy among his descendants home is Paradise. He that hath a happy home can never be poor, or want a theme for grateful song.

"Better than gold is a peaceful home,
Where all the fireside charities come;
The shrine of love and the heaven of life,
Hallow'd by mother, or sister, or wife.
However humble the home may be,
Or tried with sorrow by heaven's decree,
The blessings that never were bought or sold,
And centre there, are better than gold."

And how has it been in the home during the present year? "Thank God" many of you can reply, "it has been well." The same faces that smiled upon you on new year's day smiled upon you with as fresh a smile this morning. No gap has been made in the happy circle. The same number gathered round the hearth on Christmas eve as on the year before, and better even than preserved life is preserved love and unity, and this you have. The joy of the home has not diminished nor has its charm grown weaker.

Dear friends, if it be so, I charge you "thank God." You have such a possession, as many would give their all to call their own. There are this morning homes yet wrapt in gloom, and a gloom that is deepened by the very season of the year. The little chair that is empty and the little toys that are treasured tell their own story. In other homes, a deeper shade than ever bereavement casts, hangs heavily; for if home be not the source of purest of joys, it is of deepest misery. Think of home with all its mercies and "thank God" again and again. As subjects of the realm, we also add to the list *national blessings*. But a few weeks since all England was watching, with feverish anxiety, at the bed-side of her Prince. Intense was the interest and painful the suspense, as death seemed winning in the fight. The sorrow of the palace spread far and wide, until there was national fellowship in grief. Countless were the prayers breathed, that the threatened calamity might be spared the Royal family and the people. These prayers have been heard, and the year closes with a joy at one time almost despaired of. Let us "thank God." Yes, there is enough in the providential dealings of our God with all to give a thankful heart. True, we have all had our sorrows and our disappointments during this year of 1871.

Every heart has at some time known its own bitterness, and doubtless, there is scarcely a cheek down which no tear has rolled. But what have been the number of our trials compared with the multitude of our mercies? And contrasted with our deserts, how light will the heaviest become. Join then, every heart, in thanking God. Let not one soul refuse its tribute of adoring praise. Come all then, even the child of greatest sorrow, and see if there be not hidden in the

rough oyster shell of tribulation a pearl of mercy so exceeding precious, that it reconciles you to its casket. Thus far you will see we have only been dealing with the gifts of God's left hand. His temporal loving-kindnesses. Let us now view the blessings of His right hand, and thank Him for His mercies to the soul. Certainly of these we must place first upon the list—*kept from falling*. If during the present year we have been saved from bringing any great blot upon our Christian profession, it is all of grace and calls for highest praise. Let none arrogate to himself any of the glory. And can. we say, "We have been kept?" I mean not by this that there has been no coldness, no deadness of heart, no prayerlessness. Far from it. Long as we are in the flesh, and know anything of ourselves, our continued confession must be

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love.

But have we been kept from outward and open backsliding? Has there during the past year been a continued if quiet testimony for God? If so, then thank Him. Think, child of God, what if you *had* fallen; what if the name of Christian had been dragged into the mire by your life? The very thought is agony. O, what anguish of soul would have been yours to-day; what a hell would be within the breast. How dark would everything appear; and when restored, for what a time would this year be remembered by you as the "black" year of your life. Surely any Christian might rather wish himself in the grave than live to fall. But, beloved, thank God, it is not so with you. With no feeling of pride, but only grateful love, you may exclaim, "having obtained help of God I continue unto this day." Our thankfulness may well be intensified by the sad remembrance that some have fallen during the year, and lost their power for testimony. Whilst we mourn for them, we rejoice for ourselves with trembling, for we have been as men carrying powder and working in a forge where sparks are flying on every hand, With a nature like ours so dangerously quick to sin, and living amid a very shower of fiery temptations, how great the grace that has preserved us thus far. "Thank God." With being kept from falling, we trust most of us can link *spiritual life maintained and increased*. The two things do not *always* go together. It is possible to be free from any great and open fall, and yet have the painful consciousness that inwardly there has been a declension. Great then is the cause for thankfulness, if humbly and in the sight of God we can express the hope that the inward experience has corresponded with the outward appearance. And can'st thou not venture to say it, dear friend? Whilst blushing for very shame that you are no holier or happier christian than you are, cannot you yet add, "nevertheless I never loved my Saviour more than now, or yearned after fellowship with Him with a greater longing."

In our catalogue of spiritual mercies demanding thankfulness, we must also write down *hallowed seasons*. What times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord have we often had in secret during the past months. Days of heaven upon earth have they been, rich with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Have there not been seasons with us

all when a more than usual light has shone upon the pages of the open word? Seasons when prayer became so sweet we could do nought but pray? Feasts on the road of heavenly fare that have given us strength for many days; sips of the brook gushing from the throne of God that have enabled us to lift up our heads with joy?

Surely we have all had such times. We only mourn that, like angels visits, they are few and far between. Nevertheless the remembrance of them lingers with us still, like the perfume of spices and the fragrance of the cedar. These holy moments are heavens' gifts. *We* have received them. Let us "thank God." Last but chief of all in the list of spiritual blessings, some of you have *been converted during the year.* 1871 found you far from God, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, without God and without hope in the world. At the commencement of this year "ye were without Christ." But now, blessed be His name, "old things have passed away, all things have become new."

No longer an alien, you are like "a child at home" and into your spirit has been poured the Spirit of Adoption. Instead of being "without God" He is now your salvation and your song. Far from being "without Christ" you are now exclaiming "my Beloved is mine and I am His," and your highest joy flows from the thought of shortly being with Him. O what a transformation scene has taken place in you since last new year's day. A change that has filled all heaven with joy and inspired fresh songs from angel lips. Dear friend, whoever else may be silent you must not. The stones of this building might well cry out in judgement, if above all other voices yours is not heard, crowning the year with "THANK GOD, THANK GOD."

Yet once more and with this group of blessings I close the review of the year. We have CHURCH mercies to thank God for. For five years we have enjoyed, as a church, more than ordinary prosperity and blessing, and to His praise we say it, this year has not been less full of tokens for good than the four preceding ones. Nay, we might even say that the last year has been the best, for a fresh work among the unsaved has filled our cup of joy to overflowing and we have been permitted to have "a feast of ingathering" during this closing month. As a church we must thank God that the *spirit of hearing* is still maintained, and that He yet gives testimony to the fact that the simplest gospel is the most powerful instrument in attracting as well as converting the masses. We thank God that love to prayer not only continues but seems to increase in our midst. During this year there have been prayer-meetings as remarkable for their spirit as their numbers. Most devoutly do we thank God for them. They are the certain harbingers of greater blessings yet. During the present year the *work of conversion* has been carried on by the Holy Ghost in a large measure, and the number of anxious souls at the present time is greater than at any period during the year. Why do we mention these facts? For the sake of vain-glorying? No! God is our witness; but simply because to omit them, when counting up the mercies of the year, would be unthankful and unjust to Zion's King. O, members of this church, by every soul won within these walls—by every backsliding saint restored—by every blessing you have yourselves received—I charge you on this

dying day of another year, "Thank God." May he accept our praises, and further assist us, as we

II. LOOK FORWARD WITH COURAGE TOWARDS EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-TWO. Standing this morning upon the thin boundary line that divides year from year, we have looked back, and lo, the whole history of the past is radiant with the glow of mercy. Whilst looking, we have thanked God. We now turn our eyes to the time to come. How different the view. Then every thing stood out in bold and clear relief. Sharply defined were all the particulars making up the one landscape. Now a thick veil of mist shrouds all in impenetrable gloom. In vain we strain our eyes to pierce the curtain dark. We enter on the year by faith and not by sight. Imagination may stretch her wings and circle in the mist, transforming its wreaths into fairy land or scenes of terror, as the bias of the mind may prompt, but knowledge of the hidden treasure have we none. The hand of mercy only clears the darkness as step by step we enter in it.

1872 is yet a land uninhabited and unknown. Every moment brings us nearer to the misty veil. With what feelings shall we enter through? Let our text give the answer. Having thanked God for the past, let us now "take courage" for the future. With the Psalmist, let us sing, "because thou *hast* been our help, *therefore* under the shadow of Thy wing will we trust." Doubtless, there are many present looking forward to the coming year with a dread they would find it difficult to account for, if asked the reason. Although ignorant of the particular forms their troubles may assume, they reckon rightly that troubles of some sort or another they are sure to meet, and the very indefiniteness of them serves to magnify their greatness. Probable bereavement sickness or death, and possible loss disappointment and grief, cast their shadow on the spirit. They did on Paul. Yet he took courage. I will therefore mention, and but mention, a few thoughts calculated to inspire courage. Remember, friends, we shall have *the same God* with us in seventy-two we have had in seventy-one. The change of year brings no change in Him who is our rock and our defence. The heart touched with the feelings of our infirmities during this year will be as full of sympathy during next. Not one drop will have departed from that bottomless and shoreless ocean. The eye that has been so quick to discern our wants, and like the fiery pillar, has guided us to the close of another period of time, shall not become dim, nor lose its guiding brightness. The arm of power that has at the same time been under and around us, loses not one atom of its might. The muscles of omnipotence grow not weary, nor do their natural force abate. "Our God, our help in ages past" may well be "our hope for years to come." Whatever you have found your God in days gone past, the same shall you find Him in days to come. With Him is no variableness or shadow of turning. Away then with every doubt or fear. March on triumphantly. You walk not into the unknown alone. You have the companionship of Him whose faithfulness you have proved a thousand times. Blessed thought, pregnant with undying song, in every year and every age the saint can say, "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge—Selah." "Lift the strain higher" ye blood-bought, blood-

washed multitude; so long as breath can utter words, declare "this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide, even unto death." Remember also, that there go with you into 1872 *the same promises* that have been your support in 1871. Round about you, like the mountains round Jerusalem, or the chariots of fire round the prophet, are the same "precious promises," that have glittered like stars in your darkest night. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" includes next year also in its wide embrace. "My grace is sufficient for thee" is limited to no time this side glory. "Ask and ye shall receive. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you," stand good for any year. Time would fail to tell of all the glittering host that marches with you. Look o'er their serried ranks and "take courage." Forget not also, that the *same hope* which has cheered this year accompanies you into next. Do you say "What hope?" I reply, the hope of either your going to Jesus, or Jesus coming to you. Come what may, it hastens on the time when you will be "for ever with the Lord." Beyond care, beyond grief, beyond sickness, beyond death, there shines HEAVEN. The Lord bring us all there for Christ's sake.—AMEN.

Scripture Read—Acts xviii.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—92—732—848.

DEAR FRIENDS,

With overflowing thankfulness I acknowledge the following gifts received this month for our new Tabernacle. Will each reader make one in the list of our next Sermon, which will (D.V.) be the last number of the STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE PULPIT, as the March Sermon will be the first of "THE EAST LONDON TABERNACLE" series. *The Lord incline you to help.*

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Stepney Green Tabernacle Pulpit.

DAVID'S MALADY AND DAVID'S MEDICINE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 21ST, 1872,

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT STEPNEY GREEN TABERNACLE.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God."

PSALM xlii—11.

THE psalm, from which I have selected our text, has a beauty all its own. Whilst many others express the same experience, yet none do so in the same style. It has a language peculiar to itself, and the peculiarity is its charm. The beauty of the forty-second psalm is the beauty of an April morning—full of contrasts and surprises. Now everything looks black and lowering. Dark clouds heavy with storm come riding on the breeze. They cast a gloom on every side, and then pour down a sweeping torrent. But in a few moments their fury is spent. Rifts of light widen overhead, the sun breaks through the watery canopy, and every flower of spring glitters with ten thousand brilliants. The light appears more bright through contrast with the black masses still rolling on before the wind. But not long does sunshine keep its victory. Another and a heavier storm gathers on the horizon, sweeps all before it, and in its turn gives place to smiling light. But never did April weather change so fast as the experiences of the psalmist's heart. Extremes meet in a single verse, and are repeated over and over again, brief though the psalm is. Its beauty is the beauty of light and shade. It resembles a meadow over which the shadows of the clouds are ever gliding. For a moment all seems bright, but now with the speed of a racehorse the shadow comes, and a second after its black edge appears fringed with the glory of a meridian sun. There never is a time when the field is either all bright or all black. There is always a bright spot in some part that at one time was dark, and a dark place in another part that at one time was bright. The psalm is a combination of sighing and singing, weeping and smiling through the tears. The sob rises to the song, and the song terminates in another sob. If the psalm be one melody, it has many variations in which the most plaintive minor blends with the most exulting major. The 'Kyrie' and the 'Gloria' follow each other in quick succession, whilst often there is the "harmony of discord" worthy of a Mendelssohn. As with the psalm, so must it be with the sermon. "Cast down" must be joined to "hope in God;" "disquieted" with "I shall yet praise him;" tears have been my meat" with "the health of my countenance; "where is thy God?" with "the God of my life." May the Lord very graciously help us as we meditate upon our text. That there are many here to whom the

subject will be suitable I cannot doubt, for out of so large a number it cannot be supposed that there are none suffering from David's complaint. Depressed souls are to be found in every congregation, sorrowful saints in every assembly. Most earnestly do I pray that those of you who are suffering from the psalmist's malady may be led from to-night to take the psalmist's medicine "hope thou in God." I purpose dividing the subject as follows—first, *I shall ask you to examine the patient*, and then secondly, *I shall request you carefully to analyze the medicine prescribed.*

I.—LET US EXAMINE THE PATIENT. That he is far from well there can be no doubt. The whole tenor of his language implies disease, and so distinctly are the symptoms described that we need be at no loss to find out what is actually the matter. The man is suffering from *depression*. This is a disease more easily understood, and more readily prescribed for, when anybody else than ourselves is the sufferer. The very presence of the disease seems to take away the power of grappling with it. We have however in this psalm so full a description that it may help us to understand ourselves. Notice first that it is an *internal disease*. This fact may be learned from the oft-repeated word "soul." "Why art thou cast down, O my *soul?* Why art thou disquieted *in* me?" "O, my God, my *soul* is cast down *within* me." It was no mere superficial complaint that the psalmist had—no skin disease where all is apparent and easily reached. The roots of the evil were in the core of his heart. The enemy had not merely carried the outworks and stormed the forts, but lodged himself within the very citadel of the town of Man-soul. Now of all diseases internal ones are the worst, and doubly so when of a spiritual nature. Outward trouble will do a man but little harm so long as it keeps without. It is marvellous what a man can bear so long as he has a good heart within. *It is not work that injures but worry.* Not outward *circumstances* but inward *care*. A man may lose business, friends, and even physical health, and yet be a stranger to David's complaint. This trouble is not the trouble of the sailor when the green waves with crested heads curl over and dash against the sides of the vessel, shaking it from stem to stern; or rising in their wrath leap upon the deck, and with wild glee pour off again through the portholes. No, his trouble was not that. Bad though that may be, a vessel tight and strong will weather through it. But his trouble is that of the sailor when from one to another the whisper passes through the ship "*we have sprung a leak.*" The water in the hold is more dreaded than all the ocean without. Such was the case with David. He could say "the waters have come into my soul." Here then we have the first particular of this disease. Its seat was deep within. But notice next that although inward [in its nature *its effects are to be seen in the countenance.* In our text we read that God is the health of our countenance, therefore when the presence of God is wanting, the health of the countenance suffers. No inward sorrow can long be hidden. It is sure to betray itself; there are a score of tell-tales to reveal the secret. Let a man have never so much of the stoic in his nature, and an immense amount of self-command, all his efforts to hide his depression must at last break down and prove futile. It will out. Though consumption—that scourge of England—be entirely a hidden disease, yet its shadow can be seen in the face, and its presence heard in the cough. Those pale features with the hectic

flush—those thin hands with the blue veins so clearly marked—that cough that sounds like the echo of a grave-vault—all tell their own tale. So is it with inward care. A ploughed heart leaves a furrow on the brow, and a heavy soul puts its stamp upon the countenance. It is seldom necessary to make many minute enquiries as to the state of soul with a Christian. Look into his face and read the index there. The brightness of the eye is dimmed, and the smile of the lip—if there be one—is forced, when deep within there is spiritual depression. I am inclined to take "the health of my countenance" in its most literal interpretation, for I verily believe that physical health is more influenced by inward experience than many imagine. The only doctor that some Christians need is their God, and the only medicine they require is hope. There are several signs of this disease mentioned in the psalm, and in examining the patient we must not overlook them. One is *great prostration.* How expressive is that word "down." "O, my God, my soul is cast down within me." "Down." Yes, no word could better describe the state or feeling. The disease of depression unstrings the whole man. Doubtless many of us have known what it is to feel after some sickness such an intense prostration of the system—such an *ennui*—I use the word for want of a better—that the smallest things became a burden, and a great effort was required to do the easiest work. There was a strong temptation to sit in listless idleness. Precisely the same is the result of spiritual depression. The soul becomes so 'down' that every little burden weighs like a mountain, and the smallest duty requires an effort almost greater than we are capable of making. I will mention a few things by way of illustration. More than anything else the depressed soul needs prayer. Not only does he need it, but he knows that he needs it, and knowing it he wants to pray. But O how difficult it is. To kneel down seems almost more than he can do, and as for throwing any fervour into his cry, he is too 'down' for that. What vexes him is this, that knowing if ever he ought to pray it is now, he feels destitute of the power even to make an effort. If there are those present to whom this experience is an unknown thing, happy are they; but if the majority of Christians with us this evening are like the speaker, they have often known what it is to weep because they could not weep and mourn because they could not pray when they wanted to the most. This prostration affects all work for God. O the effort to go and teach a class of children in the Sunday School when suffering from David's malady. What weariness there is in the work, and how welcome the sound of the bell announcing school time over. Let one thus suffering be called to visit a sick or dying case. What torture it is to go How you wish something might happen to prevent you, so that conscience and inclination might agree; and when at last you do set out with what slow steps you walk, and how you hesitate to knock at the door, feeling that of all persons you are most unfitted to administer any consolation What about preaching when you have this disease? Ah, the speaker knows something of that. Surely of all misery there is none greater than having to appear before a number of people and preach when the heart is like a lump of lead. What an effort it requires! How unable one feels to make it. Instead of riding in the subject as in a chariot, you are yoked to it, have to drag it after you for a weary hour. To be too weary and enervated for prayer or work is one sad sign of this disease.

Another sign is that of *burning thirst.* You get that in the first and second verses, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" The illustration used here is very striking and significant. A timid hart has been chased by the hounds—mile after mile it has flown like the wind. Its flanks are wreathed with foam, and it blows the froth like snow flakes from its nostrils. It has distanced the dogs, but a new danger meets it. Burning thirst agonizes it and gives unnatural fire to the eye. Do you see how pausing in its flight it turns the head in every direction and snuffs the breeze in hope of scenting water. Do you hear the cry of anguish that comes from the dumb brute—for the word here used denotes the cry of the hart when in distress for water—as it turns and turns again in vain? That is the picture of the soul when full of spiritual depression. It pants for God, it remembers the time when it used to rest beside the waters of quietness and drink to its full of communion. But now all is changed. It has been driven by the dogs of depression into a wilderness where no water is. With agony it turns to the right hand and to the left, and cries "I thirst, I thirst." It is not a creed, not a doctrine, not a service that it is dying for, but God. Yea it is not merely God, but the living God. Precious though a dead Christ is, the soul yearns after a living Saviour. He wants one with whom he may walk and talk and commune as he used in days gone past. Depression of soul like fever in the veins torments with fiery thirst.

A third sign of the disease *is loss of appetite.* The psalmist says "My tears have been my meat day and night." He felt too bad to enjoy his food; grief satisfied more than meat. Now although this appears a contradictory symptom to the preceding one, yet are they both frequently found together in the soul's experience. With an intense desire for God there may yet be a great loss of appetite for the means of grace. Have you never known what it is to thirst for God, and yet find no joy in reading His book. Has it never seemed to you in seasons of depression as if all the chapters were alike, and all equally devoid of comfort to the soul? Surely you have. Have you not also known times when the sanctuary not only lost its charm, but almost became dreaded? You had no appetite for singing hymns or listening to sermons. That which at other times was counted a delicacy then palled upon the taste. This loss of relish for the ordinances of the Lord's house is one of the surest and saddest signs of the inward disease. The disease of depression is also accompanied with *acute pain in the bones.* David speaks of feeling as if he had a sword in his bones, and in his fifty-first psalm—also penned amidst much soul trouble—he describes his experience by broken bones "Make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." Now this is a description of no ordinary agony. It is not the thrust of the sword through the flesh of the arm which might give sharp but short pain, but the blade finding its way into the very marrow. A sword working its way within the bone is suggestive of excruciating anguish, sufficient to make every nerve in the frame vibrate with pain. The metaphor is not too strong Let those make light of depression who have never suffered from it, they will change their note when once

its roots have struck into their soul. Those of us who have been laid low by it know it to be no child's play to bear it, but stern work. It is all very easy to pour out platitudes into the ear of the sufferer and tell him he should think about something else and not give way, but it is quite a different thing to act upon them. Anyone can say "Begone dull care," but dull care does not go for being told. As to the advice of "not thinking about it" we can only say that none but those perfectly ignorant of what they talk about would utter such nonsense. Not think about it? Tell that to the man who has the sword point in his bones, and he will be ready to curse you for your folly, "Think about something else?" Fancy giving that counsel to a poor wretch with a crushed arm, why he would answer "How can I? Every movement makes the bones grate together and extorts a shriek." So spiritual depression makes itself felt, and never allows the sufferer to forget its presence.

More than any torture of the frame is the anguish of a soul broken on this wheel.

Shivering fits also accompany this disease. David speaks as one who had been drenched to the skin by the floods and billows that had flowed over him. As the drenched man shivers from head to foot so the depressed soul trembles exceedingly. Like the man described by Bunyan in the house of the Interpreter, he shakes all over. A look at the past will bring on one of these fits in a moment. "Ah, saith he," I fear me those sins are too great to obtain pardon. I have been no ordinary sinner; yea how know I but the sin against the Holy Ghost is mine? Past scenes rise up like horrid corpses from their graves and he trembles much, not having the assurance of their full forgiveness. Turning from the past he views the future, and now he shakes the more. "I shall, one day, fall by the hand of mine enemy," he sobs, "I can never hold out, and the name I bear will be dragged through the mire." Death has all its old terrors back and the grave its gloom. "Stand still" he cannot, but tremblingly waits to "see the salvation of God." He shivers too much to sing, or if he attempts it is difficult to recognize the tune. The tremulant stop is out to the very full. Another result of the malady is that *it affects both seeing and hearing.* Poor David was half blinded by his tears and deafened by "the noise of the waterspouts." When the tears get into the eyes it is hard to read, and a depressed soul often finds it more than he can manage to make out clearly his title to the inheritance. This is sad work, for it cuts off the only consolation left, and that when it is most needed. Again and again does the soul try and decipher what often it has read with ease before, but the tears prevent and at last he cries—

"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His or am I not?

Just as bad is it with his hearing. There was a time when the still small voice of the Spirit was ever heard making music in the heart, bearing witness that he was a son of God. Now he listens for it all in vain. He only hears the hoarse call of deep to deep and the thunder of the waterspouts.

"At noise of Thy dread waterspouts,
Deep unto deep doth call;
Thy breaking waves pass over me,
Yea, and Thy billows all."

This disease may arise from *many different causes.* We have no time to spare so will only point out three of the most general. The first is a revelation of our own heart. The saint turning his eye away from Christ for a moment begins to search the chambers of his soul. What a sight meets his eye. He beholds foul lusts creeping and crawling like lizards. Lusts that perhaps he imagined long since dead. He sees temper still unsubdued—pride yet predominant—accursed selfishness still rampant—unbelief yet abounding. The spectacle saddens him. The tempter watching his opportunity mutters in his ear "What is the use of your trying to be holy, you can never succeed." Dismay sets in and depression paralyzes. In other cases the complaint can be traced to outside causes. Trouble after trouble has come upon the man until all the buoyancy of hope has become well nigh crushed out. Every effort to retrieve the day has only ended in failure, and greater reverses. From without the waters of affliction force their way within and he wrongly concludes himself forsaken of God. There are doubtless others of us present who often sink into depression through the condition of the professing church at the present time. On every hand we can see conformity to the world taking the place of nonconformity, the spirit of worldliness increasing and the spirit of consecration decreasing. Half and half Christians abounding and the love of many waxing cold. *We behold the evil affecting the pulpit.* Mere morality taking the place of regeneration and the atonement by blood a slighted subject. Instead of beseeching men to be reconciled to God, we find ministers wasting their time in giving Sunday evening lectures about all kinds of subjects: Rome is burning and Nero is playing his fiddle. Souls are perishing and ministers are amusing them. There is enough in the professing church of Christ to make any saint cry "O God, my soul is cast down within me."

One thought more, and we leave the patient to look at his medicine. It is that although his malady is very *painful it is not in any way dangerous.* Thank God the disease of depression never endangers the life. *That* is quite beyond its reach, being hid with Christ in God. O beloved, if our safety depended upon our experience, who among us would be safe for two hours together? But uninfluenced either by our circumstances, fancies or feelings, it abideth ever the same. We are "accepted in the Beloved." We are "complete in Him." "What," I think I can hear some one exclaim "do you mean to say I am as safe when miserable as when happy?" Yes, quite. God only beholds you as you are in Jesus, and that is ever "without spot." Depressed soul, let this thought cheer you "this sickness is not unto death." It may be bad to bear, full of pain, and exceedingly distressing, but it comes not near the vital parts. No soul ever died of it or ever will.

"Your life is hid with Christ in God
Beyond the reach of harm."

II. LET US NOW CAREFULLY ANALYZE THE MEDICINE PRESCRIBED.

The first thought that suggests itself to our mind is, that *it is not to be obtained from any herbs that grow on earth.* The world has no hope therefore cannot give it. "Without hope" is Paul's description of the the man of the world. True, it has its counterfeit; but it is as delusive as the will o' the wisp that dances over the swamps at night, and as unreal as the mirage that mocks the traveller in the desert by the day.

Of true hope, "the dearest medicine of the soul," it knows nothing. A young prodigal begins life with plenty of money and consequently plenty of friends falsely so called. It is not long before his exchequer is drained of the last farthing; with that goes his last friend. Bankrupt in resources and friends he turns to the world for help—it has none to give. Even the swine are not in want of a keeper. One hope remains, he yet has health and perhaps with that he may retrieve the day. False mirage!! Excess has undermined his strength and stretched upon the bed of death he turns from past to future and from future back again to past, seeking for one thing to give a ray of light and hope; he seeks in vain. Let us not trace him further, but pull the curtains round the bed and turn from the dread sight of a desperate hopeless man taking the last step from earth. No, the elixir of hope can be distilled from nothing found below. The language of the psalmist teaches this. Speaking to his depressed soul, he says "hope thou *in God.* Turn from all within and all without and find thy hope on high, rise from thy tears and waterfloods and look to Him, in whom alone there is aught to give thee confidence. Hope, not in thy throne, not in thy crown, not in thine armies, but in thy God, who amidst all thy fears abideth ever the same."

This medicine *is beautiful in appearance and sweet in taste.* To look upon, it is clear as the crystal stream that gushes from the throne of God, and no wonder, for it flows from the same fountain head. Whilst clear as crystal it sparkles with the light of heaven. To the taste it is most sweet, causing even "the lips of those asleep to speak." No language can describe its flavour. To be known it must be tried. That which is first taken as a medicine soon becomes the most prized delicacy. *It suits all constitutions and reaches the seat of the disease.* No matter how peculiar the spiritual constitution of the man, hope in God is sure to agree with him right well. No sooner is it taken than it finds its way to the inmost recesses of the heart, and strikes in a moment at the roots of the disease. From thence its blessed influences extend. A new light flashes in the eye—the health of the countenance returns fresher than before—the thirst is satisfied—the appetite revives and the plainest food is eaten with a relish—the sword is taken from the bones, and pain gives place to pleasure—prostration departs and activity becomes a joy—it wipes the eye and makes the heavenly title-deed quite easy to be read—it hushes into silence the noises of the waterspouts and makes the Spirit's voice clear as a silver bell. O blessed medicine that works such marvels with such speed and ease.

It is equally efficacious whatever the cause of the disease may be. Is it sin? Hope in God for "there is forgiveness with Him." Is it trouble? Hope in God for He will deliver thee out of six trials and in the seventh will not leave thee. Is it the state of the church? Hope in God for He loveth Zion much, and is more jealous of her glory than thou canst be. He has all power at hand and can purge her pulpits and refine her people. *This medicine should be taken whenever required.* As thou knowest not when a fit of depression may take thee, never be without it. Carry it about thy person in a scripture phial. God has given thee many specially adapted for the purpose. Let me point you to one or two. Here is one. "My grace is sufficient for thee." Here another. "Lo I am with you always. Here another. "I will never

leave thee nor forsake thee." Here is another, and a large one. "All things work together for good to them that love God." But take thy choice, for there are multitudes. Place one in thy bosom, and when David's complaint comes upon thee, resort at once to David's medicine. God help you to, for Jesus's sake—Amen.

Scripture read—Psalm xxxiv.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book."—386—711—42, Part I.

THE OPENING SERVICES OF THE EAST LONDON TABERNACLE, Burdett Road, Bow Road, will be (D.V.) as follows:—

Thursday, February 22nd { Prayer Meeting at 7 a.m. / Sermon by C. H. SPURGEON, at 3 p.m. / Public Tea Meeting at 5.30 p.m. / Public Meeting at 7 p.m., J. W. BROWN, Esq. in the Chair.

Lord's-Day, February 25th { The Rev. HUGH STOWELL BROWN will preach Morning and Evening, and address Young Men in the Afternoon.

Monday, February 26th—Prayer Meeting and Baptismal Service at 7 p.m.

Thursday, February 29th—Sermon by Rev. NEWMAN HALL, at 7 p.m.

Lord's-Day, March 3rd... { The Rev. F. TUCKER, B.A., of Camden Town, will preach in the Morning, and ARCHIBALD G. BROWN in the Evening.

Thursday, March 7th.....—S. A. BLACKWOOD, Esq. will preach at 7 p.m.

Lord's-Day, March 10th... { The Rev. ARTHUR MURSELL, of Stockwell will preach in the Morning, and the Rev. S. H. BOOTH (Secretary of the London Baptist Association) in the Evening.

Lord's-Day, March 17th... { ARCHIBALD G. BROWN, will preach in the Morning, and Rev. WM. LANDELS, D.D., of Regent's Park, in the Evening,

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The following Donations received during the past month are thankfully acknowledged.

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Miss E. Curling, (Eastbourne)	1	0	0
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N.B.—In addition to these sums, the friends at Stepney Green Tabernacle subscribed £100 as a New Year's offering.

Donations thankfully received by ARCHIBALD G. BROWN, 17, Bancroft Road, Mile End Road, E.

The next Published Sermon to be the first of the East London Tabernacle Pulpit, and will be preached by the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON.

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East London Tabernacle Pulpit.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY AFTERNOON, FEBRUARY 22ND, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE EAST LONDON TABERNACLE.

"The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." PSALM 118—16.

THIS word might full often have leaped from the lips of believers in the olden times. This verse might have constituted part of the song of Moses at the Red Sea, for how wondrously there did God overthrow the hosts of his enemies! Then the horses and the chariots of Egypt were swallowed up; God himself causing the last foe of Israel to be swept away by the mighty waters, "Sing unto the Lord," said they, "for he hath triumphed gloriously;" and by the shores of the Red Sea they knew that "the right hand of the Lord is exalted—the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." It was so in the wilderness when Joshua fought with Amalek, and Moses held up his hands in prayer; it was so when they smote Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan. Are not these things written in the book of the wars of the Lord? And is it not said "The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name"? It was conspicuously so in the driving out of the Canaanites. When the people of Israel, untrained for war, marched into the promised land, they found that their enemies had chariots of iron, and were entrenched in cities that were walled up, even unto heaven; but yet all the hosts of the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites could not stand against the twelve tribes of Israel; they fled before them like chaff before the wind. O praise ye the Lord and magnify him, for he cast out the heathen and he planted his people in their own land. The right hand of the Lord was that day exalted, for his right hand fought valiantly. So was it throughout the period of the Judges. Time would fail us to tell you of Samson, and of Gideon, and of Barak, and all those mighty men who were as weapons in the hands of Jehovah—javelins cast forth by his omnipotence. Truly in those days, also, the right hand of the Lord did valiantly. David, who penned this psalm, knew this in his own experience, for he smote the Philistines hip and thigh with great slaughter, and overthrew all opposing nations in the name of the Lord of hosts. Long after David had slept with his fathers, others arose, and God was with them, and the Lord did mighty deeds. Have ye forgotten how the hosts of Sennacherib lay like the sere leaves of autumn when the breath of the archangel had blasted them? Or have ye not heard of the rout of Syria at the gates of Samaria? Right onward throughout the whole history of Israel, when the foes of God have made headway for a while, he hath plucked his hand, even his right hand, out of his bosom; and dashed the enemy in pieces. His people have chanted the solemn psalm

"Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered," and they that have hated him have fled before him; in the fire of his presence the wicked have been consumed like the fat of rams upon the altar; into smoke have they consumed away. "The right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly."

From those triumphs of physical might over warlike powers we turn our eyes to another field of battle—a spiritual one; and God, who was mighty with weapons of war, we find mighty with the sword of the Spirit, and with the weapons of the gospel; and we claim the verse which is now before us as a song of the New Testament as well as a chant of the Old. "The right hand of the Lord is" this day "exalted," and it "doeth valiantly."

We shall ask your attention, not to a very lengthy sermon, but to these three points:—

1—THE TRIUMPHS OF THE LORD JESUS.

2—THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL IN THE CHURCH.

3—THE TRIUMPHS OF GRACE IN INDIVIDUAL HEARTS.

To all these, and I know not to which one more than another, the text is most appropriate.

I. First, then, concerning *the triumphs of the Lord Jesus*, it may be said that "the right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." He did not come as a man of war, for he is the prince of peace; he came not here with shield and buckler, but he came with a body fitted to suffer, and with a heart strong to endure. The Christ of God came in lowliness and in shame, to be despised and rejected of men; but for all that he fought great battles in the midst of his weakness, and won for himself wondrous spiritual victories. Observe, dear friends, with holy adoration, how our Lord Jesus Christ met *Satan* in conflict, not once, nor twice, but many a time; in fact throughout the Saviour's life the prince of powers of the air constantly assailed The Perfect One. It was a glorious duel which was fought in the wilderness, and on the lofty mountain from which they had a view—those two contending spirits—of the whole world, and on the pinnacle of the temple too. Sharp was the sword of Diabolus when he sought to smite the Saviour under the fifth rib, and make a full end of his innocence; but, oh, how glorious were the strokes of the Lord himself with the sword of the Spirit, when he replied "it is written," and yet again "it is written," and yet again "it is written;" and so chased the fiend away, and triumphant angels came to minister to the conqueror amidst the loneliness of the desert. O ye attendant spirits! ye might have sung that day "the right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." All through his life our Saviour kept his vantage ground. The prince of this world assailed him, but he made no dint upon his armour, much less wound upon his soul. He was tempted in all points, the darts flew so thick that they assailed him from head to foot, but he was without a wound at the close of the conflict; tempted, but yet without sin. You know how it came to the last struggle in the garden of Gethsemane. Oh what a wrestling was that when, as it were, the arch fiend grappled close with Christ, and seized him so that

"That desp'rate tug his soul might feel
Through bars of brass and triple steel."

It brought the bloody sweat adown the master's face, yet he did not relinquish his hold upon the foe, but gave him such a fall that he never shall recover the defeat which he sustained amidst the olive trees. Gethsemane is a name of dread to the apostate angel. On the cross, too, when the devil rallied his forces for the last time, and assailed the spirit of our Lord with all the malice of his infernal nature; there, too, the great Michael, the true archangel, set his foot on the dragon's head, and though his heel was wounded yet he broke that head, and crushed out the reigning power of evil for ever. The right hand of the Lord, though it was a pierced hand—the right hand of the Lord, though it had grasped a sceptre of reed—did valiantly, and was highly exalted.

The same might be said, but we should go over the same ground again, if we spoke of the conquest which our Lord achieved over *sin* in every shape and form; it mattered not how it approached him, he repelled it, he overthrew it as far as he was personally concerned; and when the sins of his people were laid upon him—O brethren, how dreadful was that hour, but how ought we to look back upon it with devout thankfulness when the sins of his people came like an avalanche to crush him,—how gloriously did he sustain the load, with what wondrous power of endurance did he suffer the wrath of God which was due for the sins of his people. How steadfastly he

> "Bore all incarnate God could bear,
> With strength enough, and none to spare."

But when he had made atonement for ever for all his people's sins, and brought in everlasting righteousness for all his chosen, and could say "it is finished," then truly the right hand of the Lord was exalted, and the right hand of the Lord had done valiantly. I will leave that point, because you know it, and your meditations can enter into it without the assistance of my words. But, brethren, the Lord Jesus has this day conquered all our sins. There is not a transgression left to accuse his people; there is against them in God's book no record; "he hath perfected for ever them that are set apart." The work is finished; salvation is complete. The right hand of the Lord hath done for us what we could not have done for ourselves. What the angels of heaven would not have been so foolish as to attempt, the Lord Jesus Christ hath most surely completed for all believers. Heaven rings this day with the joyful songs of its triumphant saints who tell how the right hand of the Lord is exalted.

Our precious Lord is to be praised in language like our text for having vanquished *death* as well as sin. Satan and sin he overthrew, and virtually therein he conquered death. It did not seem as if he would vanquish death, my brethren, when he laid in the grave. The image of death was set as with a seal upon his brow. The Lord of life and immortality was as really dead as any of the departed sons of Adam. The three days passed over—the appointed time in which he should be, like Jonah, in the bowels of the earth—but on the third day he could not be holden of the bands of death. I think I see him like another Samson who had been bound with cords, awaking from his slumber, like a strong man refreshed, and lo he snaps the bonds of death, for it was not possible that he could be holden of them. Then the stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulchre, and forth he came

resplendent in the glory of his resurrection body. From that moment death has been destroyed. The children of God shall pass through the grave, but they cannot be confined in it. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Christ hath for ever taken away the gates of the Gaza of the grave, carried them far away where Satan can never bring them back, and death cannot restore his stronghold. Glorify the ever-living Christ, for his right hand is exalted.

The same was conspicuously true in that day when our Lord left this world, and rose to the Father. Our imagination can hardly depict that scene when they who received him after the apostles had lost sight of him,

> "Brought his chariot from on high
> To bear him to his throne."

Oh, what an ascent was that when the conqueror mounted to the golden city! Lash the eternal coursers up the celestial hills, for he comes "mighty to save." He went forth to battle, but he comes back to glory, to wear his well-earned renown. Do you not see at his chariot-wheels the monsters bound? They must be dragged to the very gates of heaven, and then hurled down again. "He hath led captivity captive, and received gifts for men." Oh, in that day of our Lord's ascending up on high, they who gazed upon the matchless spectacle of the returning King of Kings, might have cried aloud, "the right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." In those victories, beloved, you and I have a share. Satan was conquered for us; sin was overcome for us; death was bound for us.

> "Hell and our sins obstruct our course,
> But hell and sin are vanquished foes.
> Our Saviour nailed them to his Cross.
> And sung the triumph when he rose."

Believe it and be glad of it; all your enemies are overcome. You have to battle still, but you fight with conquered foes. The dragon who is most dreadful to you carries a deadly wound about him. Your sins with which you have to contend from day to day have received their death warrant. They shall not be able to follow you into heaven, or to ruin you on earth. Oh, rejoice with your Lord; conquer in his conquest; be victors in his victory; overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and give him all the glory of your salvation.

II. But now I pass on to note in the second place that our text is very applicable to *the perpetual triumphs of the Church of Jesus Christ*. The church began with feeble numbers, with small wealth, and with comparatively little talent, but she was clothed with the Holy Ghost, and was therefore mighty. Let us just look at the history of the church a minute or two, that our souls may be comforted with the prospect of the like victories in days to come. Beloved, when first the church was in the world like a new-born man-child, the Dragon vomited forth torrents with the hope of drowning it. You know the rough weapons with which the world assailed the church at first. The sword was used, prisons were put into requisition, the rack, torments unutterable, shame, reproach, all the infernal arts of persecution were employed to put down, if possible, the cause and kingdom of Christ in the world. Now only think for a minute what became of the continued attempts, the cruel attempts of the world against the church; for the

result conspicuously shows how the right hand of the Lord was exalted. The more they persecuted Israel in Egypt, the more they multiplied, and it was the same with the church of God. They that were persecuted went everywhere preaching the word. Had they been allowed quiet, they might have tarried at home, perhaps, and been like corn in the granary, but persecution broke down the door, and they were thrown like handfuls of wheat broadcast over the nations, and everywhere the precious seed sprang up. It was of no avail to kill Christians—it was like a battle with a hydra, in which the cutting off of one head makes a hundred fresh ones to spring up. Young men went to see the martyrdoms of the saints, and as they saw their holy patience they came to be believers themselves, till martyred Christians became the most powerful preachers of the gospel, and even the saints that believed were comforted by the sight of their deaths. Young converts stood around the stakes of Smithfield to learn the way to give themselves up for Christ. The anvil never smites the hammers in return, and yet it breaks many hammers. Here is the patience of the saints. God being in his church, she hath borne year after year, and God has forborne to avenge her, and yet she has triumphed. Her feeble maidens and her illiterate men, her gentle sons and tender daughters who lifted not a hand in self-defence have vanquished those that were armed to the teeth, and had the power of Imperial Rome, or of other mighty empires at their back. The right hand of the Lord, amidst the host of martyrs who wear the ruby crown in heaven to-day, is exalted, for the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.

Then at the same time the church was sent into the world to combat with the superstitions which existed in that age; and brethren, the superstitions of ancient Rome were very attractive, and very venerable. They had existed through long ages; they were interwoven with the daily life of the people, they were endowed with wealth and established by authority. Poetry, art, philosophy—all had lent their power to maintain the old heathenism with which the Christian church came into contact. I have no doubt whatever that the Pontifex Maximus of that day, if he had been told that in Paul he saw a rival, teaching a religion which would break down all the altars and the temples of Rome, would have ridiculed the statement, and yet it was so, for where are the gods of old Rome to-day? Who bows before Saturn, "father of the gods?" Who pays reverence to Juno or Diana? These have gone; and what has smitten them, and broken them in pieces? The stone cut out of the mountain without hands hath dashed them all in pieces, and broken their power like a potter's vessel, so that none shall set up these false gods again. Nor was it so in Rome alone. In all countries, the church of God has achieved a complete triumph. Weird superstitions, magical pretensions, mysterious incantations—these have fled like the birds of night before the rising sun. No form of superstition which the enemy has been able to devise has been able to retain its hold where the gospel has been fully preached. Superstition has seemed to stand like the eternal hills, but faith has said "who art thou, great mountain? Before Zerrubbabel thou shalt become a plain," and the mountain of superstition has melted away. "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly."

But, my brethren, the Church has been assailed by heresies within herself and if anything might have destroyed her surely it would have been these. I will single out but one: it was the Arian heresy. You that are well versed in Church history will know how very potent at one time the Arian heresy was in the ancient Church. The divinity of our Lord became almost universally denied, he was said to be a mere man; a good man, or perhaps the best of men, but nothing more. It was a grand day when Athanasius declared that Christ was very God of very God, and finding himself alone, yet said "I, Athanasius against the world." It did seem an unequal combat, for there were monarchs on the side of the Arians, and all their force was wielded against the truth, but Arianism—where is it now? The pure faith of God has flung it off like drops of rain from a shield of burnished steel. Arians may exist, but they slink into the dens and corners of the earth to hide their ignoble heads; the heresy is dead for any power that it has in the Christian Church, and so shall every heresy die as the eternal God liveth. Nothing is immortal but the truth, nothing is eternal but the gospel. The right hand of the Lord fights not for a lie, but his arm is made bare for the truth of His Son Jesus Christ. All through the pages of christian history this is true—that the right hand of the Lord is exalted and doeth valiantly in overthrowing error.

But the church had to suffer from something that excels any common heresy, because it is the aggregation of heresy, superstition, and apostasy; I mean the spread of Popery. In the middle ages the night was sevenfold, there was scarce light enough for the anxious seeker to see his Lord, and men's souls were crushed by the Inquisition, by the practice of priestly confession, by the domination of priests and bishops and popes. If any man had then bewailed the absence of the light, as some did, and an angel had said to him "courage, my son, the day shall come in which all this system shall lose its power, and the old gospel shall come back;" I can imagine I hear the weeper say, "if the Lord should make windows in heaven, should such a thing be?" But such a thing *was*. God found the man and gave him a heart of iron, a brow of brass, and a tongue of thunder, and Martin Luther's voice was heard ringing across these waters and saying, "therefore is a man justified by faith, and not by the works of the law." And other voices took up that strain, till in the regions where aforetime that truth was an utterly unknown thing it became familiar to the peasant at the plough-tail, and humble men and women repeated to each other that gladsome sound. "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of them that published it." Ye know, beloved, how God smote the church of Rome in those days, and as ye read the story of the Reformation, ye can say "the right hand of the Lord is exalted."

But I shall not detain you with ancient histories, I shall bring you to this day, for the truth of the olden time is fulfilled in your ears again this day. Wherever the gospel is preached the right hand of the Lord is exalted. We have seen it and therefore we speak what we do know, if the gospel of Jesus be faithfully preached, no matter by whom, if it be the whole gospel affectionately declared, prayed over, and believingly delivered, it will always glorify God's name. I want you to notice in what respect the Lord's arm is exalted in our time.

First, in arousing the attention of a negligent people to the gospel. There is nothing in the world that makes so much stir as preaching Christ. You shall preach anything else you like and the people shall slumber, but if you will preach Christ out and out, simply, in plain Saxon as Paul would have preached it, not with "wisdom of words," you shall find the people will come together. I know not why it is, but so it is, that even those who dislike the gospel will come to hear it, and though sometimes they gnash their teeth, and curse the man that preached it, yet they will come again, they cannot help it. A gospel preacher has chains coming from his lips which bind themselves around men's hearts, and he holds them captives, unwillingly at first, but afterwards joyfully. They are captives to the power of sovereign grace. There shall be little need of advertisement to the simple, plain, bold gospel preacher. You shall put him down in a back street, you shall give him a room down a court, you shall do nothing more for him but let him speak to a handful of people and the first news that you will hear of him shall be that he is eccentric, that he is extraordinary, that he is a fool, that he is a madman. Good news, this, always: there is a man of God somewhere about when you hear that. Straightway people want to hear this enthusiast, this methodist, this presbyterian, and they rush to listen, and then it is that a strange power is felt by the people. They do not know what it is, but there is a something in the preaching which seems to seize their hearts and hold them, it is nothing other than the fulfiment of the word "I, if I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me." Where Christ is lifted up there people will be drawn to hear; they must hear. We need not ask them to come; they must come. Where this body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together. Where a full Christ is proclaimed, there shall they come who need to find a Saviour. Does philosophy achieve this triumph? Where are the crowds that year after year hang upon the lips of its learned men? You call it a poor triumph, so it may be in itself, but in its ulterior results it is a very great one. There are wise men of the earth who would give their eyes and their ears if they could but get the people to listen to them. Where Christ is not preached, there are generally more spiders than human souls. Put Unitarianism into the pulpit, and you shall soon see how the pews can be emptied, and the congregation rendered select. A gospelless gospel has great power of dispersion, but it has little power of attraction, but the gospel of Jesus Christ soon draws a multitude together, and the right hand of the Lord is exalted. But you will say this is little, and I shall confess that it is comparatively little, but mark you, if the gospel be preached it does not end in men's coming to hear it and returning home; for soon that gospel comes like an eagle from afar and pounces down upon men's hearts, and makes them a prey to its power. Those who came to scoff, remain to pray; they who looked on from curiosity like Zaccheus, receive the Saviour into their house; and those who came even for enmity, are converted into friends.

How greatly the right hand of the Lord was exalted in the days of Whitefield and Wesley. The lives of those two eminent men have been written lately by many loving pens; and I must confess I am always delighted to read the narratives, however they may be written. Though

I have read them many times, I can always read them again. Oh, it was wonderful, that when the whole land was asleep—when the Church of England was asleep in the dark, and the dissenters were asleep in the light, there suddenly rose up a man who dared to stand upon his father's grave in the church-yard and to preach the Gospel, and side by side with him flew a twin seraph, who went into the fields and began to proclaim the gospel, and all at once true religion stirred our country from shore to shore. These men preached faith as a saving grace, the necessity of regeneration, and the work of the Holy Spirit, and these truths had power in them. Those were brave days—the days of the early methodists—when the time of the singing of birds was come, and the land was full of the Holy Spirit. And it is just so now. Wherever the same gospel is preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, there are conversions, there are broken hearts, there are spirits healed by Jesu's love, there are glad ones consecrating themselves to the Redeemer's service. "The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly."

And this becomes true—we have seen it—in some of the very darkest parts of London. What a wonderful instance of what God's grace can do may be seen by any one who chooses to learn the history of such spots as Seven Dials, where God's love has placed earnest evangelists, or in Golden Lane, where a dear brother of our own labors amidst the poverty and sin of the masses. Why, when I have gone to see my brethren meet together there, the poorest of the poor, costermongers, men who were drunkards and blasphemers, women that were thieves and harlots, and have heard them sing the praises of Jesus and rejoice in his dear name, I have felt "The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." And here and all around I need not quote instances, for you know them better than I do, lions are turned into lambs, ravens into doves, and the most unlikely spots in East London that were deserts, salt lands, and not inhabited, that looked as it they were cursed of God, have been made to rejoice and blossom like a rose when the preacher of the gospel and his master have set their feet upon them. Oh yes, the right hand of the Lord is exalted. They say that the gospel has lost its power. I read the other day that some of us were the echoes of dead puritanism, that we were not abreast of the age, and were preaching a faith that was practically dead. Sirs, they lie in their throats that say so. Some of them know that they lie, and are full of malice because they know it. The gospel is no more dead than they are, nor half so much. It lives, and lives in all its energy. They love not the truth who dare to say that it has lost its force; it is blind with hate which thus maligns it. But it is "unphilosophical." Hair splitters do not care about it; neological divines sneer at it as only fit for old women. Glory be to God, if it suits old women it will suit us and all kinds of people; but inasmuch as it is not philosophic according to their declaration, that word of God is fulfilled in our ears, "The foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than man."

It is also common enough to hear men say, "But look at those who preach it, they are uneducated men, men that are not of the higher class of society, unskilled in classic lore and not able, always, to give

the original word of the scripture upon which they preach." Yes, sir, and it would be a difficult task for any man to prove that the early triumphs of the gospel owed a solitary jot to education and learning. In looking at the inscriptions in the catacombs a few days ago when I was in Rome, I could not help the observation continually coming to my lips that the earliest christians most of them, or almost all of them, must have been illiterate. Scarcely were they able to write their friend's names, for the commonest words upon the slabs of stone placed upon the graves of the early christians, are very frequently badly spelt, and there are Greek letters and Latin letters intermingled, showing that they hardly knew how to finish a word in one language, but must piece it out with another, not knowing completely either the one alphabet or the other. Ah, but it was because God had put his truth into the mouths of babes and sucklings and so established strength. When the church conquered by such humble instrumentalities and the truth was mighty when preached by such simple men, then it was that the right hand of the Lord was exalted, for the right hand of the Lord had done it and not the wisdom, nor the craft, nor the energy of man. God's arm was more conspicuous because of the feebleness of the instrumentality. Much rather, then, will we glory in infirmities because the power of God doth rest upon us. Were we of ourselves able to preach with power and had we the gifts that some contend for, we might share the praise of our usefulness, but if we be unlearned and ignorant as they say, yet if God will draw the people to hear the gospel and God will save them by our preaching, we do herein rejoice, yea, and we will rejoice. If we be vile for sticking to the old doctrine, we will be viler still, and if we are loathsome in the sight of the world, we will be more loathsome yet and speak more boldly in this name, and will not seek to be found among the great and mighty, but rather among the feeble and foolish by whose ministry the right hand of the Lord is exalted, and doeth valiantly.

III. But now I must in the third place say a few words, and but a few, for time fails us, upon the triumphs of grace in individuals. Let us talk together. Do you remember, some of you who are this day converted, the time when first the gospel had power over your souls? I do remember how I fought against it. A mother's tears could not move me, nor a father's earnest rebukes. I heard the gospel many times and I was little affected by it, though I knew it all. But I shall never forget when it came with power to my soul. I had no shield that could shake off its darts; the arrows of God found a ready way into my conscience, and they seemed to drink my very blood. My wounds rankled and were corrupt; my soul refused to be comforted. Then I used to go up to my little chamber and bow my knees in prayer and come out more wretched than when I entered it; I searched the word of God to find comfort, but could not find it; then it was that he who knew me might have said "the right hand of the Lord is exalted in that young man, for he was proud and lofty and self-righteous, and now he lies in the very dust and wonders that God lets him live—marvels that there should be a gospel for him, and can but half believe it true that such a wretch as he can ever be saved." Oh I wish the Lord would come with power to some self-righteous ones who are here this afternoon, You are as good as your neigh-,

bours! Ah, but suppose you are damned with your neighbours will that help you? To be damned in company is small benefit. Oh, but you have never done anybody any harm! No, except your God, and you have robbed him of all the praise that was due to him, and lived in this world just as you might have lived if there had been no God. O proud sinner, I cannot bring thee down, but God can. Oh for a blow from that mighty arm to level thee and roll thee at his feet, biting the dust in shame and self-abasement. Some of us know what that means, may you know it too, and then you will say, though your heart be breaking as you say it, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted! He is good but I am evil—he is great but I am nothing—he is infinitely holy but I am shamefully impure. God be merciful to me—to me a sinner. God save me for his name's sake." When his sharp arrows pierce mens' hearts, the right hand of the Lord is exalted.

But let me talk with you further. You that know the Lord and love him. Do you remember when you sought to escape from the multitude of your sins? Do you recollect when they compassed you about—when they compassed you about like bees? You could not count your sins—you had forgotten them; they seemed dead and buried, but they all came to life again, and they swarmed about you. They buzzed about you at your table; they stung you in your sleep; in your dreams they harassed you; at your work you had no peace because of them. And dost thou mind the place, the spot of ground, where thou didst meet with Jesus? Some of us recollect it to a yard. We looked to him upon the cross, and the battle was over at once. One look to Jesus crucified, and the sins that compassed us about were destroyed in the name of the Lord, and the foes that threatened to devour us were quenched as the fire of thorns, through the precious blood of Jesus. Do you remember it? Oh let your soul go back to your spiritual birthday; ring the bells of your heart again; hang out the streamers of your soul for that happy day when Jesus washed your sins away. Oh beloved on that day beyond all others the right hand of the Lord was exalted, the right hand of the Lord did valiantly for you. It is a grand picture—I should like to see some artist attempt to sketch it, but he certainly must fail—I would like to hear some poet sing it, but he could hardly reach the dignity of the argument, when Miriam and the daughters of Israel took their timbrels and went forth with dances to sing because Egypt had been destroyed and Israel was free. Do you know the note in that song which pleases me best of all, it is this, when they said "the depths have covered them! There is not one of them left." They looked upon the Red Sea and could not see a trace of their foe, and I think I hear them singing it, "The depths have covered them; there is not one—not one—not one," and they answered each other "not one—not one—not one of them left." And so when you and I looked to Christ and saw the atoning sacrifice like a mighty sea rolling over all our sins, in that day our spirit sang "The depths have covered them! there is not one—not one—not one of them left." Every sin is gone, every transgression is swallowed up in superabounding grace. "The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly."

But I must still talk with you of things which you do know. Do you recollect, brethren, that troublous time since your sins were forgiven?

How hard you found the struggle with some sinful habit. Some of us, it may be, had fierce tempers to fight with. Some converts have formerly indulged in many foul habits, and it cost them many struggles to get rid of these propensities; but the grace of God always enables a christian to overcome every sin. I know there are some who think that they cannot overcome some sins. "O" say they "that is constitutional—that is my temperament." Brother, never excuse sin in that way. Do you think Jesus Christ did not intend to cleanse you from constitutional sin? Do you think constitutional sins have no evil in them? I have no doubt it was constitutional sin that made Cain kill his brother, but he was sent to hell for it, and so will men be if they allow constitutional sin to reign in them. No, by the grace of God we can overcome every sin, and we must. I should be very glad to see a man who had reached perfection, but I will tell you what I expect to see and that is men and women who will never rest satisfied short of it, who feel that as long as ever they live they mean to wage war against every sin, no truce—no parley—no signing a treaty with the Gibeonites and saying "you are to stop in my soul to be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water." Let them all perish. Let every sin be put to death, and as God helps us to drive out sin and to be made like unto his dear son in our outward life, every victory we win we shall ascribe to him only who is our sanctification, as well as our justification, and we must say that his right hand is exalted, for he doeth valiantly.

The same has been true, beloved friends, in many cases in which you and I have had to overcome our troubles. What sore afflictions have we passed through! Some to whom I speak, it may be, have had mountains of tribulation. Yes, beloved, but when God has been with you, you have stepped from mountain top to mountain top without going down into the valley at all—you have been enabled by God's grace to have the hind's foot which stands upon the rocky places without slipping: you have gone through deep waters of tribulation, but never have they drowned you, for God has been with you, and your strength has always been equal to your day. Some of us can look back upon a long fight of affliction because our hair is grey with age, and others of us who are as yet in the midst of the battle can join with the saints who have passed through the like tribulation, and can say in our delivering mercies, the right hand of the Lord hath been exalted.

But, beloved friends, to close all where there was much room for great enlargement, let me say, when you and I shall come to die, (as soon, thank God, we shall, for it is a subject to be regarded with thankfulness,) we shall find in our dying moments that the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. I might almost say, that I came here from the grave, for in truth, it is but a day or so ago since I went to bury one of the holiest men I ever knew, and I may add, the happiest man I ever saw in all my life. He fell asleep at a good old age; but as I stood by his bedside in his last illness, I often envied him. Covered though he was with sores, his body lacerated, all his bones aching, and as it were out of joint, yet he said to me, "What a happy thing it is to be here," and I said, "a happy thing to be upon a dying bed?" "Yes" said he, "for I am with God and God is with me, and Christ is mine and I am his, and

it is the happiest day I ever lived." He had often said that in his lifetime, for I never knew him otherwise than rejoicing in his God. I was glad to see him, when his eyes were almost closed in death, and hear him say, "It is the happiest day I ever lived." Just before he died, instead of expressing any regret at the pain he was feeling, or at his departure, he turned round and said to the dear ones around the bed, "You seem all changed to me from what you were. I love you, but I have reached a higher stage than the things that are seen. I have seen the King in his beauty, in the land that is very far off, and I have heard words that it is not lawful for a man to utter." And they said to him, "Can you not tell us something of what you have seen?" He said, "You must pardon me; I am forbidden to tell you, but henceforth I have done with all things here below, and I am taken up with the joy and glory of my Lord. My bliss is so great that it kills me. I cannot live much longer through the excess of joy I feel." In a few minutes he had closed his eyes and was with God. Oh, when I have seen the saints expire, as the negro said of his minister, "He is dying full of life"—so have I seen them dying full of life—the best of life; and I have then thought, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously! The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly!" Fear not, the last conflict shall be the chief of your victories this side the river.

And, now beloved friends, I congratulate you, the members of this Church, upon entering upon this new house of prayer. I have already in prayer tried to express what I feel in my heart towards you who shall worship here. Do make this your daily prayer, that God may be exalted in this Tabernacle. May God save some of the biggest sinners in Stepney in this place. They used to call Tottenham Court Road Whitefield's soul trap; I hope that this may be a soul trap. Oh, that many might be caught in it—not of those who belong to other Churches. We are glad to see you to day, but we don't want to see you here again. Nobody here desires to be a sheep-stealer. Get you back to your own fold. As you are here however, be so good as to leave some of your fleece behind you this afternoon. We do desire to see in this place many strangers, many of those who have been accustomed to go to no place of worship whatever. I trust we shall have plenty of people from the Ratcliff Highway—plenty of people from the docks and shipping—plenty of people who will gather here to hear the gospel who have not cared to listen to it before. Dear hearers, fill this place. You say, "Mr. BROWN, our minister, must do it." But you know one man can't fill a chapel like this. Let each one bring a friend, and no doubt if each one does that, we shall have a multitude always assembled here. Let us begin with a full house, and I believe those who hear my dear friend, Mr. BROWN, once, will continue to hear him, and will keep on coming, and you will continue to have a full house for many a year to come, and hundreds will be converted. The Lord bless you, and make you a blessing.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 10TH, 1872, BY

THE REV. ARTHUR MURSELL.

"Past feeling." EPHESIANS iv.—part of 19th verse.

THIS sentence forms part of a fearful description of the state of the Gentile population in the midst of which the Ephesian Church was planted. And we feel that, terrible as the sentence is, these two words form the most terrible sentence in it. They brand the stamp of hopelessness upon the picture—they close the shutter on the window, draw down the blind, and mark the whole scene as one of hopeless death. "Past feeling!" We read in this description of "blindness of heart," and we feel that it describes a very critical and fearful moral condition. But we have also read of a finger which touched blind eyes, and made them see; so we fondle the hope that this finger may yet open and unscale the closed eye of the blind heart that it may greet the light. We will not despair of one concerning whom we must each say "of such were some of us." But when it is once truly said of a man that he is "past feeling," the spar to which we cling seems to drift out of our hand in the dash of that sad sentence, the shutter seems to fall over the window with a sudden slam, the red sun sinks in the sullen west with an angry dip, and our heart tells us that to be past feeling must verily be to be past hope. No more dreary sentence could by possibilty be passed on any man than that which these two words involve, "past feeling."

But dreary as the picture is, brethren, do not let us evade its contemplation, or look at it as a scene afar off. There is a tendency amongst us to shift the incidence of such descriptions as these to a distance, and to transfer them to some other quarter. "Past feeling!" It may apply perhaps to the heathen of a long past age; to such persons as those Gentiles in Ephesus to whom the apostle applies it in the text. If it has any possible application now, it must surely refer to the idolators of distant lands, or at the worst, to just a very few of the lowest and most debased amongst the dregs of society here amongst ourselves. So we talk about it. As when we are warned of an epidemic we say, "O it is only in Russia, or Persia, or some place a long way off, we need not take precaution here." Then when it comes a little nearer we say, "It is only an imported case, and is not likely to spread; a good system of quarantine will keep it from our country." And when it comes amongst us we say, "It is only in the neglected neighbourhoods, and amongst intemperate people; abstinence and disinfectants will keep us all right." Thus we trifle with a great grim fact, and will not look it in the face. Brethren, don't treat this description in this way. If it applies to any one, however far away, it is bad enough. But if its application were so contingent and remote, it would be as useless as it is thankless and forbidding to descant upon it here. But it hints at

nothing so remote. It indicates a numbness which may chill *our* spirituality; it touches a paralysis which may smite the moral vitals of any one of us, an ague which may spread its death among the spirit-fibres of our neighbours or ourselves. It is not a distant and unreal danger, having nothing to do with you. "Past feeling." It waits not for the reckleseness of the embruted bacchan, the coarse blasphemer, or the dainty chamberer, to bring about this pass. It may come upon the prim religionist, the constant chapel-goer, and the strict church professor. It falls not alone upon the brawler in the taproom, the loafer at the billiards, or the intriguer in the brothel; but it may fall upon the pew, it may fall upon the pulpit; and, alike of those who hear the truth and of him who speaks it, it may perchance be said that they are "past feeling." Seeing that this is a condition which *may* beset us all, it becomes a practical question for *us* to consider. It is a state which steals over the spirit, creeping unawares over the powers and capacities. There is a process known in practical chemistry which I think is called *annealing*, which consists in so hardening a surface as to make it impervious to pressure or to blows, The process is performed by means of extremes of heat or cold. And by similar extremes may the human heart be made impervious by the fire of passion, succeeded by the chill of indifference, to all holy impression. Have you not seen sometimes on a cold wintry day a poor wretch in the street, shivering with the piercing pain and agony of the cold, and then at some later stage of the cruel exposure seen the same form, no longer quaking as before, but all the former pain benumbed into insensibility, the body and the mind alike apparently indifferent. The poor creature has got "past feeling," and now if you were to give a draught or a meal, or a warm garment, the first sensation would be one of pain, before the functions and the faculties gained their normal life. So with a benumbed conscience. At first it trembles at the sin, but soon becomes indifferent, and if anything should rouse it from that stoicism, the first feeling is one of deep, sharp pain, the arrow rankling, before the peace and calm can settle on the soul. But if the heart and conscience grow so deaf and blind and hard as to be quite "past feeling," then there seems no recal, but only death and judgment. Now, brethren, this process of spiritual numbness *may* go on in you or me. It is not a disease peculiar to the heathen, to the idolator, or to the open profligate. There is a liability in you and me to take the said infection. Some forms of it especially beset the stated hearers of the gospel. It is just possible that some may have well nigh reached it. If you can hear the mention of such a possibility without a spasm of anxiety, that is a sad sign of at least an approach towards this deadly moral ebb. When that fearful home-thrust came from the Master's mouth while sitting at the table with the chosen twelve, "one of *you*, even of *you*, my long companions, the waiters on my ministry, the comrades of my daily converse, and the witnesses of my miracles, one of *you* is a devil." the anxious question fired every eye, and moved every tongue, "Lord, is it I?" And surely, in presence of the possibility that any who has been trained in a Christian home, who has lisped at the altar of a mother's knee the forms of prayer, who for years has come into the house of God, and heard of Christ, and of his life of love and light, and his death of sacrifice; who is familiar with each moving incident of the legend of the cross, and to whom the language of the gospel story is an oft-told tale—that such an one may be "past

feeling," or at least may become so, should thrill each one of us with the question of solicitude and concern "Lord, is it I?" If none of us have reached this stage, those who are conscious of sinning without compunction, who know that they do guilty things without sorrow or regret, and return again and again to the wrong, easily stifling the conscience which would fain arrest us, may be sure that we are very fast approaching the condition which is described as "past feeling." Any one of us may, if we choose, bring ourselves to this plight; any one of us may, if we will, obtain the grace of God, which only can save us from it. Not, then, as a theory or a speculation, but as a personal, practical home-question do we urge the solemn heed of all to the language and meaning of this text, "past feeling."

And as the most practical way of treating this practical question, we would consider for a moment a few of the ways or means through which it is possible to fall into this condition; and possibly the most easy and dangerous way of all is by yielding *to* and indulging *in* vicious and depraving habits. This is the connection in which the words of the text are used. The Gentiles to whom reference is made had thrown the rein upon the neck of passion, and had given themselves up to work all uncleanness with greediness. We have a picture of an utter and complete abandonment to the dominion and influence of vice. When we see a man thus captive to his passions, the animal completely ascendant over the intellectual and the moral, and the flesh bloated to a degree which overlays and stifles the movement of the spirit, it is a certain and a melancholy symptom of the strides of that moral malady which ultimately leaves its victim "past feeling." This is a condition which is reached by degrees; it cannot be plunged into all at once. Obstacle after obstacle has to be broken down, voice after voice must be stifled, prayer after prayer contemned, memory after memory banished. All these are *feelings* which have to be *passed by*: passed by an effort, a wicked effort against conscience, till the striving spirit has been grieved and grieved again, and at last quenched outright. Alas, the history is too common to be wonderful. It is terrible to think of the realities to which usage may accustom us. We can read of the havoc of war, and the chapter of accident, and the story of poverty, and all the acts in life's rehearsing tragedy; of how man murders brother man, and call it glory; of how economy neglects precaution till travellers are mangled or workpeople are done to death, and call it accident; of how Dives leaves Lazarus to perish at his gate, and call it misfortune. But there are tragedies enacting in the moral world, murders and suicides in the world of souls which are ten thousand times more terrible, and yet to which we are still more insensible than these. There are those around us whose lives are one incessant sacrifice to vice, to the flesh, and to the devil: and who touch the unclean thing with an unfaltering hand, and confront the carnal altar with an unshrinking heart; brave in the foolhardihood of wrong, and coward in the moral nerve which alone truly knits the man. These brawlers who disturb us with their orgies, and the bawds who flaunt their shameless vices in our streets, were not *always* as they are; they were not born to this—there was a time when the dew hung pearl-like on youth's tendril, and the unwithered blush was damask on the cheek; the morning of the manhood and the womanhood was fair with morning's promise. And it was not blighted all at once, the dew drop did not dry up in a moment, the vermilion did not fade in a day.

The mildew crept over it stealthily. It began in some secret yielding to a weakness, the petting of some frail folly. The first weak yielding was followed by a strong remorse, but the second lapse was stronger, and the remorse was weaker; and sin and conscience strove in inverse ratio till the effort at resistance died away, the flame of relenting was quenched by drops, *a drop at a time*, till impunity left nothing but the blackened embers on the hearth. The reluctant slave became a willing captive. O young man, heed the homely but much-needed warning, Beware of first beginnings. Mark how the Psalmist paints the yielder to his own heart, "He hath left off to be wise and to do good: he deviseth mischief upon his bed: he setteth himself in a way which is not good; he abhorreth not evil." You begin by being able to hear and to speak about sin, then perhaps to witness it, and then to partake in it, and to do it. That was a truthful if quaint division of a sermon by that preacher who discoursed upon the first verse of the first psalm, and divided his sermon into *walking*, *standing*, and *sitting*. "Blessed is the man that *walketh* not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor *standeth* in the way of sinners, nor *sitteth* in the seat of the scornful." Yes, walking, standing, sitting. First you walk round the sin; there's no harm in that. Then you stand still to look on; and at last you sit down in the chair, and enrol yourself in the scornful company. Beginnings are slight and pleasant, but they are ever downwards, and the momentum gathers, the path is slippery, and it leads to death. Thus may we, any of us, if we give way to that law of sin which is in our members, become "past feeling." We get past the gospel. The gospel of salvation appeals to feeling; and if we get past feeling, we get past the gospel, which is past hope. God cannot save. We have eluded the great net of grace. "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." "My son, when sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

II. But this state of things may be induced by *indulging in a trifling spirit*. We don't mean a mirthful buoyancy, for this will be inflated and made more light and airy and happy by religion; but we mean a habit of trifling with real and solid truths, and looking at life through an unsubstantial and unreal medium. Habits are the results of states of mind, and if we guard against false states of mind we shall avoid bad habits; but there is an aimless and indolent habit of life into which we may allow ourselves to fall, which has a sadly benumbing effect upon the better manhood and the moral life. Living for objects below our capacity, opportunity, and destiny, looking at mere pleasure as the "be all and the end all here"; trying as it were, to wile away the time from day to day, and to *kill time* literally by such ephemeral and unworthy beguilements, that we may well write upon the blank paper of each passing day, thus wrested from its noblest purposes, "*perdidi diem*," "I have lost a day." There is a class of people who try to drawl and lounge through life as if it were a game to be played out; living for amusement, or for the mere accumulation of money. Brethren, our capacities are measured at the height of our aims, and if we lower those aims we dwindle our capacities. Pitch the aim low and you lose the faculty of earnestness, which is the true faculty of *living*. Sink the purpose to a grovelling plane, and you spoil your powers of attention, of concentration, and of realness. You cease to care for anything great or good, you lose all tenacity of impression, you become shallow, empty, a moving machine, not a living man. The intensity of

life is gone. Look back over each day, and ask "Have I hoped, thought, aspired; have I grappled, longed, fought, struggled, *prayed*? Have I looked onward or upward in any sense? or only blundered on and on, and taken things as they have come; whistling at life's plough, till I have forgotten that I have hold of it at all, or that I have an honest furrow to carve into the acre? If I have lived thus, I have not lived at all. I have only walked in my sleep; and walked nearer to a sleep from which there is no waking. If I go on thus, each fibre will relax; each nerve of manhood and of soul will shrink, and I shall be "past feeling," past seeing when the morning comes, past hearing when the cock shall crow.

III. You may get "past feeling" *by slighting and stifling religious impressions.* There is not one of us but has such impressions at some time and in some form, coming more or less frequently, or with more or less force. Conscience speaks to us all, compunction touches all. Some messenger of forbearing love and fatherhood comes to us all. But there are two ways of treating conscience, two ways of dealing with compunction, two ways of receiving the messenger. The one is by hearkening, the other by stifling; the one is by yielding, the other by striving; the one is by opening the doorway of a melted heart, the other by opposing the flint of a seared bosom. Have you never felt in some quiet parenthesis of the day's busy work, or, perhaps, in some wakeful moment of the night—"this life of indifference I am leading is not the true life, I ought to be living nearer to the God who made me, and who cares for me, and who upholds me, the events of the past ought to speak to me more emphatically, and the mercies of the present ought to touch me more distinctly." Does some fond memory never steal over you, some still voice never whisper from the spirit-world, some "vanished hand" never lay its finger on your fancy, as though it would fain warn you of some wrong, or point your mind upwards, or beckon you away from something that is sinful towards something that is pure? Has no vivid dream come to you with its lessons? Is there no cemetery where a certain quiet grave is eloquent to speak to you, to remind you of a mother's prayers, a wife's faithfulness, a sister's gentleness, or a father's love? There is hardly one of us but has such monitors. And how do you treat them? Do you cry back to them with an answering heart, as the tender messengers of God. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"? Or do you turn away and slight them, and try to drown them in the bustle of avoidance, and shake them off as unwelcome and disturbing visitors? According as you treat them, will they treat you. They will either come to you again and again with their gentle, elevating, purifying ministries, and refine you towards a nobler life and a blessed immortality, or they will turn away from your ungenerous and stupid deafness, and leave you as a calloused churl, with "he is given to idols, let him alone." You not only drive away the angel, but you leave the heart blunted and unsensitive to its next visit, till at length the very ministries of love and grace abandon you as one who is "past feeling."

IV. And I sometimes think, brethren, that in our common way of listening to the gospel there may be another danger of gliding or lapsing near to that state of heart which is here spoken of as being "past feeling." We talk about ministers as if they were public performers, and of sermons as if they were entertainments. Our thoughts

and our remarks are all about the man who speaks, his looks, his style, his manner; or about the Church, and its windows, and its service, and its choir, and its chanting; but, oh! so little, so *very* little about the Saviour to whom, if they were real and true, and not a delusion, a sham, and a lie, the sermon, and the supplication, and the song, were altogether pointing. Taste is critical, but feeling is dormant. We can post ourselves up in technical terms about lancet windows, oriels, clerestories, and the lectern, and the reredos; we can know as much about albs and cassocks as a court milliner, and we can be ready and alert to wheel to the west, and bow to the east, according to the current wind of doctrine. And yet the Church was not open as an arena for your genuflexions, or as a text for your pedantic criticism, but as a banquet hall where your hungry soul was to be fed, and the need of starvelings supplied. And if a full heart has been telling you that Jesus Christ died for sinners; if the emphasis of Christian love has been bidding you behold the Lamb of God, then you must verily be well-nigh "past feeling" altogether, if you can hear those tidings without response, or look on Him whom you have pierced, and not mourn.

Ah! brethren, this gospel-preaching and this gospel-hearing grows far too hackneyed in our thoughts; we take it as a sort of every day thing, and prate away about how this man preaches and how the other man preaches, and how *we* like this man and don't like the other man, and it is all the man and ourselves, and our likings and dislikings from beginning to end. It is an oblivion of the gospel this constant mindfulness of the messenger. You don't think much about the postman; it is on the letter that you are intent when you are expecting the message of love, of gain, or business. But when the message is all about your soul and its immortal interests; all about the Saviour who died for us, and the love he challenges; then, all we can think of is the poor letter-carrier, the uniform he wore, the loudness of his knock, and the mode in which he left his message. We put the tidings in the waste-paper basket of forgetfulness and say, "There's nothing by this post, perhaps the next mail will bring some profit, an order or two worth seeing after." Brother! you think there's no delivery on a Sunday, and there is no use in looking out for news. But I tell you there is a delivery on Sunday, a delivery to-day, *at your door*; the message contains an order, and an order you may well neglect all other business till you have executed; an order whose neglect is beggary, but whose negociation is a royal dower. The messenger thunders at your door; the letter that he leaves is written, signed and sealed with blood, and these are its contents, "I couns el thee to buy of megold tried in the fire, and white raiment that thou mayst be rich," for "wherefore dost thou spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" O, is it too much to say that the man who can sit and hear and *know* that he is a sinner, and that Christ is a Saviour; who can hear of sin, of righteousness, and judgment to come; of Christ and his cross; of the devil and his angels; of heaven and hell; and go away and think of nothing but the dress and tone of voice of the poor instrument or messenger who told the news; is it too much to say of such a man that he is "past feeling"? Brethren, we are not performers set up for you to criticise. It is nothing whether you like us or don't like us. We are not to be brought into

the calculation at all. If the shout rings out on board ship "breakers ahead!" the passengers don't say "Dear me, what a wonderful voice that man has!" but they wake to the danger and cry for deliverance. We are simply ambassadors for Christ, unless we are empirics, charlatans, impostors, and "as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God; for he hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him."

Thus then, may you and I glide on towards that stage of heart-life which is described as being "past feeling." You may turn this glorious sanctuary into a soul-womb for a new life, or into a colossal sarcophagus for the entombment of your spirit. The gospel of love is a vain thing; the story of the cross is an unmeaning fable to him who *will* not hearken with his *heart* as well as with his ears. O my dear, dear brothers and sisters, it is very likely you and I may never stand face to face again till we meet before the judgment seat of Christ. But *do listen* whilst I tell you this, it will be entirely your own fault if ever you get "past feeling." There is no doctrine which need stand in your way. All that Christ teaches is meant to draw you. Don't believe anything that seems to limit his love, for any such construction of it is a lie. He *does* love you. He does call you. He loves you *all*. He calls you all. If he doesn't call all, he calls none. If you get "past feeling" it will be because you thrust aside the spirit which to-day renews its strivings with you. It will be because you stopped your ears. The *means* of grace are yours, and there is grace abounding for you, waiting just for you to take it. There is manna, like crystals from the crown of God gemming the stubble of the desert; only rise and gather it. There is the rock, only touch it with the rod, and see if the silver stream will not flash forth and ripple to your feet, that you may quench your thirst and lave your brow. If you get "past feeling" it will not be because you never had the feeling, it will not be because grace did not appeal to it. *Past*, PAST feeling. It shows that the opportunity has been yours, and you have passed it by; that you have let the harvest go and the summer end, and thrust in no sickle for the grain. If, in company with your idol you pass by the day of grace, God may pass you by and say "He is given to idols, let him alone." But to-day he does not say "let him alone." He says "plead with him, tell him I delight not in the death of a sinner, but would rather he would turn and live. Show him my cross, my hands, my feet, my side. Speak forth the tidings of my full, my free salvation. Give it the emphasis of my oath, sworn by my own eternal throne, by the sapphire of my temple, and the jewels of my crown. Tell the worst, the vilest, the hardest, that I wait but for the touch of faith upon my garment's furthest hem, that he may be saved with an everlasting salvation." Brethren, that is our commission this morning, and we have come here to utter in the Master's name. It is but a weak key-note to a tune which I pray God your pastor may have strength and grace to sing to you, till it has charmed away the last doubt or dread from ten of thousands of awakened hearts; but you who are here now must not wait for any other voice to carry on the tune. There is one last word which we are permitted and commissioned to sound and shout into each ear with all the emphasis of Calvary, with all the unction of a Saviour's love; that word is "Now." "*Now* is the

accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Yes, it is the accepted time for you, old man, thin-locked and tottering, grey in sin, hoary in insensibility, with the cold white snow of apathy more thick upon thy heart than the snow of years upon thy brow. Don't say you are "past feeling;" there's yet some pulse stirring in your crawling blood. Your little grandchild with her flaxen locks and big blue eyes can coax a tear into your dim eye by a look. O let her come upon your knee and tell you what she has been learning at the Sunday school, that Jesus saved a man who asked for his remembrance with his last breath; let her sing to you the song they taught her—"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child." And even now you shall find Him ready at the invocation of that simple ministry to look upon your second childhood, forgetting all your manhood's sins; and your night shall reflect the faith-sheen of that child's morning, and your December shall be crowned with the dew-pearls and the blooms of May. There's some spark under the crust of that seeming death which the cross can touch and kindle. May God wake it into feeling now!

But you, young men and young women, yours is the opportunity! O what would not some of the old sires give to tear up the blotted and ill-written past, that they might start afresh with *you*! that they might have the spiritual opening which is your's. And yet some of you intend to go away from this place just as you came into it. Is it so? Do you intend to go out as you came? I tell you, in God's name, *you can't do it.* You must go out either better or worse than you came in; either nearer to God, or further from him; nearer heaven, or nearer hell. These are not vain imaginations; they are not phantoms. It is not rhapsody we speak. They are solid, dreadful facts. O dear friend, as a dying man, let me beseech you, give your heart to God. For Christ's dear sake, give over trifling. Give up procrastination. Drive out the thief of time from your house. Begin a manly struggle with your sin. Begin a steady consecration to your Saviour. Enlist on the conscription of Christ's chivalry. Dare to be a follower of the crucified. Don't be ashamed of the gabberdine of Nazareth. O, my tongue is feeble, my words are weak, the language falters as the heart grows full. I don't know what to say; and yet I don't like to leave you. The appeal will not take the wing, the point, the life, we long to give it. But though it won't come from me, it comes from every bleeding wound of the dear Lamb of God, as though a speaking tongue pleaded and thrilled between its crimson lips; it comes all warm and loving from the heart of him who lived the life and died the death, and pioneered the resurrection; and, to the deafest ear, the dullest heart, the deadest in its trespasses and sins it cries "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "I will restore the years which the canker-worm hath eaten." And "though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool, and though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than the snow."

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East London Tabernacle Pulpit.

ETERNITY.

A Sermon to Young Men,

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 24TH, 1872, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT THE EAST LONDON TABERNACLE.

"Eternity."—ISAIAH 57—15.

I have to preach to young men this evening, and here they are in their hundreds. Grand is the opportunity—glorious the privilege—but almost awful the responsibility. Grand the opportunity—for I may never again have so vast a company of young men at one time within sound of my voice. Glorious the privilege—for I have a gospel to proclaim suited to every case, and worthy the acceptation of all Awful the responsibility—for souls are in the balance, eternity is the theme, and the Lord demands faithfulness towards you, with the threat that if it be wanting, he will require the blood of the slain at my hands. It is this thought that has weighed upon my spirit with a pressure no words can exaggerate or fully describe. At one moment it has so overawed, that terror-stricken I have shrunk from the service, and almost guiltily wished I had never passed my word to preach the sermon; the next moment it has filled me with impatient longings for the time to come. The fire has burned within and roared restlessly to leap forth in words of flame. The "woe" has been unto me if I preach not. And now the hour has come, and I must address myself unto the work. May He "who inhabiteth eternity" and "whose name is Holy" clothe me with the Spirit as with a garment, make me speak as a dying man to a dying multitude, and compel you to listen as if His own voice was rolling through the place. And what shall I speak to you about? I can imagine that to this question there would be a variety of answers. Had I asked some, the response would have been, "let your subject be some of the great political and social problems of the day! handle some of the difficult questions that are shaking society to its centre, and threatening to revolutionize old and long-revered opinions." Had I asked others, the advice would have been "preach the necessity of manly morality, lash vice of every kind, and extol the beauty and happiness of a virtuous life. Brand with infamy all licentiousness, uncleanness, drunkeness, meanness and selfishness, and exhibit the grandeur and loveliness of purity, chasteness, moderation and generosity. Lift up a high standard of home and mercantile life, and urge all to attain it." Perhaps a third might have suggested as a topic the benefit of mental culture and intellectual improvement with a dissertation upon those temptations that particularly assail young men." These might have been, and probably would have been some of the answers, had I asked the question of man. But higher and more tremendous is my theme for I asked the question of my God; yea I cried unto him with tears,

"Lord, what shall I preach about to the young men." The answer that came back thrilled my soul, it was, ETERNITY. Yes, young men, God commands you to-night to listen *to* eternity as *for* eternity. There is something so majestic in the very word that it needs no apology, for being introduced, and drowns all opposition. Eternity !! Before that word let all minor subjects bow, and for a season disappear. Eternity! Let its never-ending cycles absord our every thought and banish things of time. But how shall I speak to you upon such a subject? Where shall I begin? It has no commencement. Where shall I leave off? It has no end. How shall I encircle it in language? It has no frontiers. Eternity !! It is a mountain that has neither base nor summit. It is a chain that hath no ends. Eternity !! Launched upon this subject I feel as one in a tiny skiff without a sail, an oar, a rudder, floating upon an ocean that has no shore, no bottom, no wave, and no tide. Vast though the subject is, its importance is vaster far. Let the solitary note of this warning bell arrest intense attention.

WHAT IS ETERNITY? Perhaps the best definition or description is that given by the mighty puritan, Charnock, in his work on the attributes of God. "Eternity" saith he "is a perpetual duration which has neither beginning nor end. Time hath both. Those things we say are in time, that have beginning, grow up by degrees, have succession of parts. Eternity is contrary to time, and is therefore a permanent and immutable state, without any variation. It comprehends in itself all years, all ages, all periods of ages. It never begins! It endures after every duration of time, and never ceaseth. It doth as much outrun time as it went before the beginning of it. Time supposeth something before it, but there can be nothing before eternity; it were not then eternity. Time hath a continual succession; the former time passeth away, and another succeeds, the last year is not this year, nor this year the next. We must conceive of eternity contrary to the notion of time. As the nature of time consists in the succesion of parts, so the nature of eternity is an infinite immutable duration. Eternity and time differ as the sea and rivers; the sea never changes place, but the rivers glide along, and are swallowed up in the sea; so is time by eternity." A simpler, but perhaps more striking definition was that given by one of the pupils of the Deaf and Dumb institution at Paris, who, in answer to the question, "what is eternity?" replied, "The lifetime of the Almighty." This is the gage and measure of our text, "The One that inhabiteth eternity." O, stupendous thought, eternity is vast enough for God to live in! Like Him, it ever was, is, and ever shall be. In trying to define and realize our one word of to-night, the mind reels, imagination travels hopelessly with weary wing, all comparisons fall infinitely short, all illustrations break down upon the threshold. Heap metaphor upon metaphor, and you find yourself yet within time and eternity untouched.

I have said enough upon that which must ever remain incomprehensible and ungrasped after all is said. Let us rather seek to bring the power of this boundless word to bear upon hearts and lives. It is a strange but sad fact that *no subject is less thought about and more ignored than the boundless one of eternity.* This is the case, not only in the world, but in the church likewise. The powers of the world

to come exercise their full influence over few. To the many eternity is still more the dream than the reality. This may be accounted for by the fact that the things of time surround us—press upon us —trouble us, and force themselves in a thousand ways upon our notice, while the things of eternity though not less real have fewer earthly reminders, and more quietly wait for recognition. It is only great grace that can make the future as real to man as the present. A small thing near appears larger than a great thing at a remote distance. A shilling held close to the eye is sufficient to more than cover the circumference of the sun. But although we may thus account for the existence of the fact its marvel is in no way diminished. There seem ten thousand reasons why, to the saint at least if to no one else, the life eternal should be uppermost in the thoughts. It was for this life, not for the little span of time on earth that we call life, the Lord became incarnate, a man of sorrow, grief's acquaintance, and at last a sacrifice upon the cross. Every incident in that life of suffering and death of ignominy is eloquent upon the theme of eternity, and it is passing strange we can read the story as often as we do, and yet remain earth-bound and time-trammelled. The sighs, tears, and bloody sweat of Gethsemane's winepress are too awful to find their explanation in anything this side the moment when the angel shall declare that "time shall be no more." The darkened sky, the streaming cross, the broken-hearted victim, the rent veil, and the opening graves tell of an atonement too grand to have its blessings limited to the few years we spend on earth, and of a punishment due to sin to great to be compressed into anything less than an eternity. The wounds of Jesus cry to the saint with incarnadined lips "the life to come! the life to come!" The very end, moreover, of conversion is found in eternity. The day in which our hearts were broken and bound up—the day in which a Saviour was revealed and accepted, was a day on which like a pivot eternity was hung. Then was the mightiest change effected that even God knows. A change that filled heaven with joy and struck fresh notes from a myriad golden harps. Then as far as we were concerned, the bottomless pit was closed and its fires quenched—then was heaven's gate flung open before our eyes and our entrance there secured. Surely from that moment even reason seems to say the future became the one grand object of our thoughts and aspirations. All we can say is "we marvel it is not more so." Yet one more thought that makes the mystery the greater. All those things which are the peculiar privileges of the saint, and which distinguish him from the rest of mankind, are either in eternity or point to it. There is not much on earth to show the benefit of being a Christian. Poverty, sickness, bereavement, trial, these are as much the heritage of the saint as the sinner. Yea, we go further and say that besides the ordinary sufferings which are common to all, the Christian has extras which are special. The earthly badge of saintship is often reproach—coldness—sarcasm—persecution. With thousands it has been death. Well might the apostle say "if only in this life we have hope we are of all men most miserable." Christ's livery on earth is far from an attractive hue. He keeps the exaltation and reward of his followers for hereafter; that is, after we have done with being *here*. Is it much then to suppose that the Christian will be

a man who whilst sojourning here lives in spirit in his hereafter? Certainly not. A poverty-stricken man who is yet heir to an inheritance could hardly do otherwise than in thought anticipate his future wealth. So much for what *should* be. Let us now ask ourselves, "what is the case? Does eternity rule with imperial sway within our hearts?" We blush at the answer we have to give. O beloved, if it did would there be the petty selfishness we so often exhibit? Would there be the unchristianlike craving for position, and hankering after this world's honour? Would there be the mean and despicable motives that so often influence our actions? Would there be the repining and murmuring under small trials that there is? Should we be such creatures of circumstances as we are, elated or depressed with every changing scene in the panorama of life? Surely not. A man under the power of the world to come would be as much above these things as the stars are above earth's battle fields. As little influenced by them as an angel in heaven by a snowstorm on earth. No, let us be honest with ourselves and frankly confess that we have never yet yielded ourselves to the power of the word Eternity. Not only is this want apparent in our inward experiences, but it is visible in our dealings with the unsaved.

Imagine for a moment, dear Christian friends, that you and I grasped, in some measure, the meaning of the word of eternity. That we never looked upon a soul, except in the light of that word. Would not our actions be the very contrast of what they often are? How, in eternity, we shall despise the timidity, and fear of ridicule, that tied our tongues on earth. O young men, if the inspiration of that word did but fall upon me, I should preach a different sermon to what I am. Could I but see you as so many candidates for Heaven or Hell, what awful earnestness would be mine. Surely, these eyes would be blinded with tears, and forgetting all the false decorum of service, I should entreat you, as if pleading for my own life, "to be reconciled to God." O, Eternity, Eternity, preach to the preacher! But would it not be equally so with you? Think, young man, of your grey-haired father yet unsaved. Think of him in relation to that word eternity, and your reserve will melt, and with all filial reverence, and with filial love of the highest kind, you will plead with him about the future of his soul. Remember that mother so indulgent and so kind, and yet unconverted You almost dread to speak faithfully to her, lest you should wound so gentle a spirit. Is that true kindness? Link with your mother's name the word eternity. Think of her, if you can, as a lost soul, and weeping on her neck, true love will warn her of the wrath to come. Young Christian in the work-shop, yours is no easy task I grant. At the very thought of personally speaking to the godless gang, you see the look of indignant scorn, and the sneer of pity for your being so soft a fool. "Canting hypocrite." "Tabernacleite"—"Brownite"—these are some of the mildest terms which will greet you, with others we dare not mention in public. Speak for Christ, and you know you will become the butt of all—the lapstone for every man in the place to sharpen his sarcastic powers upon. You dread the ordeal, and hesitate to bring such obloquy upon your head.

Friend, I have a word to say to you, it is "Eternity." Yes, let that thunder through your soul, and you will be a giant in your testi-

mony. The poor ignorant scoffing crew of fellow-workmen know not what they do. They will repent it on earth if converted, and they will remember it with horror in Hell, if lost. Speak to them, I charge you, by the powers of eternity. What is a temporary shock to the nerves compared to a lost eternity? Mc CHEYNE writes in his diary:—"M. G. lies sore upon my conscience. I do no good to that woman. Speak boldly. What matter in eternity the slight awkwardnesses of time.

But if eternity is too much slighted by the saint, what shall I say about its treatment by the world. By the masses it is a tabooed subject, and polite society refrains from mentioning it. It is as harsh and discordant a note to them as Jonah's cry of "yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed," must have been to the gay revellers who that night were making merry. It accorded ill with the clatter of their goblets, and was a jarring note in their songs. Eternity! Shut the door in its face. It makes a bad match with foot-lights and ballet dancers and ball dresses. Had we but time, we could give you a hundred pictures of how the world ostracises it. See the man in his office, intent on making money. When a youth, he always said he would die rich, and he bids fair to keep his word. For years he has never allowed feelings to cross his path, and now they seldom trouble him at all. £ s. d. has been the trinity he has worshipped for half a life time—particularly the £, and such worship soon makes the soul as cold and hard as the coin he handles. The world calls him a good business man—a few widows term him "next door to a robber," and about a score of orphans curse his name. But what does that matter to him? The law was on his side, if justice was on the other. Go into that office, put your hand upon his shoulder, and if you dare, say "friend, I have come to speak to you about eternity." Slam goes the ledger—open is thrown the office door, and he tells to you take eternity to another market, for he has enough to do to think about time. This is no over-drawn picture. The original is to be found in plenty of houses of business in this great city. Do you see yon gay looking young man. He abhors, with all his heart, the close-fisted, hard-hearted character I have described. His character is the very reverse. "Gaiety, gaiety," is his god. "The world was made for enjoyment" is his creed. Go to him, as he stands laughing under the lights of that music hall. Just whisper in his ear "*eternity*." Ah! how he starts. as if an adder had stung him. Eternity! Away with it. It makes the gilding look paltry; the lamps seem to burn less brightly. For a moment, under the magic power of that word, the dancers seem dancing "the dance of death" upon the edge of hell. "Eternity," says he, "What could have put that nightmare into my head. It is all nonsense," and he turns upon his heel, and drowns the thought in deeper dissipation. But without multiplying proofs of that, which needs but little proof, I will appeal to the honesty of many present whether I am not right. Friend, would you have come here this evening, had you known eternity was to have been the theme? Whilst I have been speaking, has there not been a struggle going on within—a desperate effort to escape from the majesty of the word, or bid it defiance? In your heart of hearts you grant it, and I ask for nothing more to prove

that eternity is the most distasteful subject to the natural man.

Let us now notice further, that whether it be ignored or not *its importance remains the same.* You and I must deal with it, whether we will or no. After all cavelling and shirking the stupendous fact remains the same. There is an eternity and we have to live it. Oh if banishing it from the thoughts removed it as a fact, there might be some wisdom in the world's action, but what words can describe the worse than Bedlam madness to ignore that which only quietly waits to prove itself. Methinks I see a young man dying who all his life has "left eternity to look after itself," as he used to say. Time with him is ebbing fast. Death stands by the hour glass with outstretched hand, watching the few last grains of sand as they run away, The last comes. It falls through. With it goes the soul. Time to him is over, a simple thing of the past to be remembered. Eternity silently receives the spirit. Hark! did you hear that cry. "O eternity release me, I never believed in thee, never thought of thee, banished thee from all my reckonings and conversation. Let me go this once and all shall be changed." Then from the vast abyss comes the answer. "Thou shouldst have thought of this before, tis now too late, thou art mine." O friends, he of all fools is the greatest fool who ignores a fact he must at last acknowledge. Laugh at eternity but you laugh not away its reality. Turn your face from it and it will but leap upon your back. Say it is an unpleasant subject to think about, it will be a more unpleasant thing to endure. Let this thought be branded upon the minds of all. *We must meet eternity.*

In eternity there will be some marvellous revelations. Hidden things will there be disclosed, and secret things made known. This thought has a very bright side to it and may well cheer the weary child of God. You know not yet, dear friend, what good you may have been the means of doing. The seed you have scattered has apparently all been carried away by the passing birds, and no golden harvest has ever greeted your eye. Wait, and in eternity you shall know what you know not now. There are some bright revelations for you that will double your heaven. Pastors who died with broken hearts discouraged because they saw no fruit shall find sheaves of golden corn many and great. They who thought their lives had been barren shall be greeted by their children in the Lord, and astonished cry "who hath begotten me these? I thought I had been desolate." Teachers shall find there were more conversions through their words than they ever dared to imagine. Tract distributors shall discover that out of the highways some have been compelled to come in. Little acts of kindness long forgotten shall be found to be remembered. Cups of cold water shall receive their reward, and visits to the sick be acknowledged as visits to Christ. O workers for Jesus there are some bright surprises for you in eternity. But to the ungodly how terrifying the thought. Ah, sirs, there shall be some revelations made that shall burn like molten brass. What will the smooth-tongued religionist do when the secrets of his *true* life are disclosed? Where shall he hide his head as before the open scoffers it is proved he was as vile as they, only veneered over with a profession of godliness? Eternity will soon rip the veneer off, and "hast *thou* become as one of us" ring in his ears.

What revelations will be in store for the licentious debauchee as those crowd around him who, although unknown to him on earth were ruined by his example, and curse him for it in eternity. What will be the feelings of the gay libertine as he meets those who were started on a path of shame and sin through his seduction, and who hiss in his ear that they trace their damnation to the threshold of his house. The theme is too sad to be pursued. All I can say, and God knows I say it from the heart, is "the Lord in his mercy spare all present from such revelations of eternity. Time presses, so I pass on to the next thought, and I entreat your attention for it is all important.

The nature of your eternity will be decided at the cross. It is not the number or the heinousness of your sins that will condemn to hell, nor the beauty or strictness of your morality that will bring to heaven. Eternity will be decided by your relation to a crucified Jesus. Reject Him and you are lost, let your morality be never so high. Accept him and you are saved, though your sins have been black as perdition itself. One day as Christ was walking, there met him two men of the country of the Gergessenes, they were both possessed with devils. Wild were their looks, fierce were their actions. For years they had been the terror of all who were obliged to pass near the grave-yard, among the tombs of which they roamed and shrieked. The moment they beheld our Lord the devils within them made them shout "what have we to do with thee, Jesus." Ah, poor maniacs, they had more to do with him than ever they imagined. He was their only hope although they knew it not. The language of the sinner is ever the same. What have I to do with a crucified Christ, he boldly asks. I answer "every thing." Eternity depends on what you do with Christ. Heaven, if you trust him; hell for ever if you die rejecting him. Oh what tremendous importance does this give to the story of the cross. Mark the man as he listens to it; alas, how unmoved does he appear! Would to God he could but see the interest displayed by others who know the awful issues at stake. Heaven watches him with anxious eye. Did but a tear roll down his cheek—did but the publican's prayer break forth from his lips —did but his heart whisper "blessed Jesus, I take thee as my substitute, my Saviour," all these angelic hosts would be jubilent with song, for they would know that to that soul eternity would be bright. Hell watches him also; prompts pride, unbelief and scorn. See, he turns upon his heel, and mutters "what have I to do with Thee?" Ah listen to that shout of fiendish joy, as hell prepares itself to receive the soul. "Lost! Lost! Lost!" peels through the pit. Friends, as it is a solemn fact that your eternity will be decided by your acceptance or rejection of Calvary's atonement, I ask you which shall it be? I fear to-night will decide the eternity of some. There will be separations at the cross, and divergence of paths from this evening. The history of the two dying thieves will be repeated. Some of you, who like them, have been boon companions in sin, have, like them, this evening been brought near to a crucified Christ. There they separated, and there will you. Some of you will I believe "look and live," and the trembling scales shall be turned unto eternal life. Others I fear, like the companion thief will damn themselves with an "if." "If thou be the Son of God." They went as far as

the cross together. One was one side of it, the other on the other. They never came nearer—they never met again—they never will. O young men, if you forget every other word I have spoken, if you make the sermon as a whole the subject of your pleasantry and laughter, remember this, you *are playing with your eternity when you trifle with the cross.*

And now my time is gone, and I must leave you; yet I feel loth to do so. Eternity still weighs upon my spirit and says "have you no more arguments to plead, no more invites and entreaties. Try once more, and for the sake of my never ending ages let them not go just yet." But what can I say? If Eternity arouse you not how can I hope to say anything about it that can arrest you. Yet stay! I have one more arrow left in the quiver—God guide its flight. What *would not the lost give if they had your opportunity?* If it be not too bold a flight of imagination, conceive for a moment of one more opportunity of hearing the gospel being granted to the lost in hell. The bolts of the prison house are drawn, and swift they fly to hear the message. The place is crowded in every part—pews, galleries, aisles, platform, everywhere the strange congregation eddies. What eagerness to catch every word, what dreadful silence as I speak of the one hope left them, the one opportunity granted. No listlessness, no inattention there. Eternity I need not speak about. They have already begun to know its meaning. The hope of salvation is what with an anxiety intensified by a knowledge of hell, they long to hear. But this can never be. The lost have heard the last invite and warning they ever will. Opportunities of grace are for ever over. But, young men, remember this, what is for ever denied to the damned is yours to-night. The invite is yours—the warning is yours—the opportunity is yours What will you do with it, despise it? Then may God have mercy on you, for sure one drop of gall in the cup of perdition will be the remembrance of this evening's service. I can say nothing more. O Eternity! Eternity! Eternity! Thou palace of the saved, thou prison-house of the lost. I have spoken about thee to this company, now preach unto them thyself. Let thy voice be heard after mine is silenced. When this congregation disperses and melts away to a thousand different homes, follow every unit that has made the whole, and utter in his ear thine own dread name. When night falls and sleep steels over the eyelids of the sinner, even then speak to him in his dreams. Wake him with a start, and make him in the midnight hour hear thy solemn voice. Preach to every heart until ticking clock and chiming hour shall only seem to say Eternity—Eternity, Toll, toll thy solemn bell until each hearer of to-night has fled to Christ and found salvation there. I have done. May God begin. Eternity is never done.

Scripture read—Mark viii.

Hymns sung from "Our own Hymn Book."—90—288.

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East London Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE FOR ME.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 21ST, 1872, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT THE EAST LONDON TABERNACLE.

"Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul."—PSALM lxvi—16.

IT is but natural that birth-days should be remembered days, and I sincerely trust that amongst the many time-honoured observances which are gradually becoming obsolete, the "keeping of the birth-day," may never be reckoned. It is the gala day in the years of childhood before the stern lessons of life have arrayed it with a solemn hue. Yes, let the children "keep" it. They pay their happy if unconscious homage, to a most momentous event. To live is a grand responsibility, and the day of birth has a thousand claims to be remembered. The world, heaven, and hell, are all interested in the new-born child. Destinies as eternal as Jehovah are ushered in with birth. Let then the returning anniversaries be seasons of joyous praise and solemn thought. Against the date let memory put her mark. But if the birth-day be a time of joy with the child, it is equally a time of interest to the parent. With loving eye and thankful heart he notices the growth, and watches the gradual opening of the bud. The awakening intellect, the improving speech, the developing character, are all marked and compared year by year. Father and child, though from different causes, are one in their remembrance of the natal day. Now if it be so with the natural birth, how much more should it be so with the spiritual? If to be born is not to be forgotton, surely to be "born again" is to be held in undying remembrance. The importance of the first birth dwindles into insignificance compared with the importance of the second. Yea, the joy of the first depends upon the second, for he only has cause to rejoice in birth who can also tell of being "born again." Upon the tombstone of every man who has never known the second birth might be truthfully engraved the words, "good were it for this man if he had never been born."

But, beloved, hundreds of us have known what it is to be born from above. We have had a heavenly natal day. There has been a moment in our lives when heaven sung "he lives." Then let us keep it, and make it our gala day. Let us reckon our life (and it is the only true life) from that date of mercy, and whenever the anniversary comes round, let us see to it that it passes not unnoticed or unsung. Known or unknown, noticed or unnoticed, there *was* a day when first

the cry of a new-born child of grace broke from our lips. Rejoice in the fact, and remember also that our heavenly Father rejoices with you. O, it cannot be, that earthly parents celebrate the birth-days of *their* children, and the heavenly Parent remains indifferent concerning His. All that is in a father's breast is infinitely more in God. His joy over us greater. His watchfulness more intense. His interest deeper. He marks the growth of His own life in the soul, and with satisfaction beholds the increasing likeness to Himself. He "joys over us with singing, and rests in his love." The heavenly Father and the heaven-born child rejoice, and together, "keep" the happy day. These thoughts have been suggested by the fact, that all the past week I have been celebrating my own heavenly birth-day. It was last Wednesday, eleven years ago, at half-past eleven in the morning, that, by the grace of God, the new life commenced within my soul. The anniversary has brought old times back to mind. Vividly, as if it only happened yesterday, I see myself, at one moment the anxious sinner, the next moment, the singing sinner saved. The old joy has still the dew of youth upon it, and about nothing else can I speak to you this evening. Our text is one that every saint can enter into and understand. God grant that our love may become inflamed, and our gratitude intensified, as together we declare what God has done for our souls. We will divide our subject into two very simple parts. First, *we will try and tell the tale*, and secondly, *we will give a few reasons that we think warrant our doing so.*

I. LET US TRY AND TELL THE TALE. "What He hath done for my soul." What has he done? Why, first, *He has done that which no one else could have done.* From first to last the work is of His own right hand, and infinitely beyond the power of any other. *No angel, nor any number of angels*, could have done for me what He has done. They may indeed "excel in strength," but the work required, as far exceeded their strength as their might exceeds a gnat's. I will tell you what an angel can do. He can pass through the streets of an Egyptian city at the dead of night, glide into every house with unsprinkled door posts, and place the seal of death upon the sleeping first-born. He can do so fearful a work between midnight and day-break, that there shall not be an abode without a corpse. Before his power Egyptian pride shall bite the dust, and Egyptian chivalry succumb. Later on, an Assyrian host is encamped, numerous as the forest leaves. Loud is their laughter, blasphemous are their boasts, as they resolve on the morrow to swallow up the chosen of the Lord. But—

> "The angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
> And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
> And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
> And their hearts but once heaved and for ever grew still.

No might of the Gentiles could arrest *that* foe. Single handed he was more than a match for the Assyrian legions, and on the morrow when the sun rose it shone on upturned faces, white as marble—eyes already glazed in death, and breastplates rusted by the night dews. It gleamed on silent tents, and banners whose proud inscriptions seemed to mock the death-stricken host. One angel can do all this and a thousand times as much, but all the shining ones combined could never have done

what "God hath done for my soul." Assemble all their glittering ranks—let cherubim and seraphim, angel and arch-angel, stand in a blazing circle, and put within that circle a little child, and tell them to change that heart from stone to flesh. They are powerless. The child's will is stronger than their united strength, and they confess there is but One who is mighty enough to save. Thanks be unto God then, for He hath done for me what no angel nor any number of angels could have done. He hath done also what no *saint nor any number of saints* could have done. But few words are required here. The very longing of our hearts after the salvation of others has taught us the utter helplessness of man to convert man, for when most our soul has yearned over them we have had to cry—

"But feeble my compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves,
Thy own all-saving arm employ,
And turn these drops of grief to joy."

He hath done that for my soul *which no minister nor any number of ministers* could have done. I know that many truly good men—doubtless intending some other interpretation to be put upon their words—declare over the unconscious infant they have just sprinkled that it has been regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ's church, and then with what appears unto us as bordering upon wicked audacity, venture to thank God for it, saying "seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is by baptism regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits." Well, the after life proves the folly of the assertion, and most of these men, better than their creed, plead with their *regenerated* congregations to be reconciled to God. He hath moreover done that which *I could never have done for myself.* Not more completely is conversion work beyond external than internal human power, and salvation by others is not more impossible than salvation of ourselves. Salvation of self! Sooner could the infant cast out in the field and lying in its blood, say unto itself "live." Salvation of self! Yes, when dead men with cold lips call themselves to life—when blind men give sight to their eyes that have never seen the light—when the white hand of the leper can with a touch make the rest of his body like the flesh of a little child—not before. Of all impossibilities under the sun self-regeneration is the greatest. Come then, and hear all ye that fear God, and I will tell you that He hath done for my soul what neither angels, saints, ministers, self, nor all combined could ever have done. Secondly. *He has done that which requires many words to describe.* No one word can fully express the work done, though in general it may be described as SAVED. Saved! Ah, that is a grand word worthy of being written in letters of gold. I have hanging up in my vestry an engraving that has suggested many a thought, and it will now serve me for an illustration. Standing upon the edge of a rocky reef over which the surf roars and boils, is a sailor, evidently one of a life-boat crew. A ship is being dashed to firewood on that iron coast, but a rope has been successfully stretched from wreck to rocks, and along this rope the passengers are being slung in a rough made cradle. The engraving represents the honest fellow just grasping the cradle across which there

lies a swooning mother, her long hair dripping with the salt wave, whilst nestled in her arm sand looking with wondering gaze, is a child of about two years old. *Under* them leap the waves—*over* them flies the scud, but *round* them are arms with sinews that look like whipcord knots, whilst at the foot of the picture is one word that tells the whole history, that word is "*saved.*" Do any ask "What has God done for your soul that you should talk so much about it?" I answer, pointing to that thrilling scene "He has done *that* for it. He has saved it. Out of the jaws of death and from eternal wreck has he delivered it." But whilst in the general "saved" may describe the work, it fails to tell all. A saved soul includes many things. I can but mention them. A saved soul is a *God-pardoned soul.* All its sins are forgiven, and its iniquities drowned in that deluge of pardoning love that rises high above the topmost peaks of all its mountain crimes.

A saved soul is a *God-reconciled soul* Once at enmity God and the sinner are now at peace. All differences are at an end. The prodigal has been embraced and kissed by the father. The rebel has grounded his arms, and bent his knee to the monarch, and the monarch has raised him up, and with a smile of love put him amongst His children. If I may so express it, God and the sinner have met and shaken hands beneath the shadow of the cross. They are at at-one-ment there.

A saved soul is also *a sin-delivered soul.* This is something more than pardon, or reconciliation. A higher blessing. Pardon remits the punishment but leaves the guilt, but justification acquits the person of every charge. Believer, your sins are not merely forgiven, but they are done away with, put out of sight, removed from you as far as the remotest east is from the extremest west. In the eye of God you are guiltless as His Son. A saved soul is also *a God-arrayed soul.* This is higher still. The former blessing was a negation of guilt, this a possession of righteousness. A righteousness, mark ye, that is not comparative or capable of improvement, but a righteousness that is superlative in its quality—the righteousness of God Himself. A saved soul, even to the omniscient eye of Deity, is without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but altogether lovely and glorious, robed in the splendour of "Jehovah Tsidkenu."

A saved soul *is a heaven-entitled soul.* This crowns all. Not merely am I delivered from hell, but in my hand is placed a title-deed to glory. This is no fiction or flight of imagination, but a blessed fact. Possessed by every saint is a title that God Himself will declare to be valid to all eternity. Now believer, if all these things be included in what God hath done for our souls, said I not rightly that many words were necessary to describe the work? Let us then, as God pardoned—God reconciled—Sin delivered—God arrayed—Heaven entitled souls—call on all, far and near, to come and listen to our joyous tale.

Thirdly.—*He has done that which can never be more completely done.* Notice the past tense used in the verse, "What He hath *done.*" Yes, blessed be God, not "what he has begun and left us to finish," but what He has Himself gloriously completed. Let us mark this well, for much of our joy, as Christians, depends upon our realization of this fact. Had God but laid the foundations, and left it unto us to com-

plete the superstructure, He had as well done nothing. But "done," "done," "done" is replete with joy, it leaves me nothing else to do than sing my thankfulness. He has not merely put me in a salvable condition, but saved me—not merely made reconciliation a possibility, but reconciled me unto Himself—not merely put me on a road that leads to heaven, but guaranteed my reaching there. He would be a fool for his presumption, who should call all to hear what had only been commenced by God, but was dependent for completion on his own exertions, but he on the other hand is a traitor to his Father's glory, who holds his peace concerning what his God has done. A religion of the two letters, DO, can never be a religion of song, but a religion of the four letters, DONE, is a religion that need never want its accompaniment of praise. See to it then, that in salvation's anthem this note of divine completeness ring loud and clear.

Fourthly, *He has done that which can never be undone.* Not only is the work complete in itself, but its completeness shall ever abide. No power from within or without, from earth or hell, shall ever undo that which is so divinely done. The rope that linked the wrecked vessel to the shore, and bore the precious freight I just now described might snap, and let its burden fall within the sight but helplessly beyond the power of the gallant life-boat man upon the rocks; but the cords of everlasting loving-kindness never break. He who wove them is He who by the word of his power upholds all things. Or to change the simile; no storms or blasts can lay low the palace of salvation built upon the Rock of Ages, for every bolt is riveted by omnipotence, and the whole buttressed by Almightyness. Yes, He hath done for my soul what can never be undone. Inspired by this thought we feel we can dare throw down the gauntlet and challenge hell O lion of perdition, seize if thou can'st those whom the Lion of Judah guards! Wolf of the pit, thou art welcome to the sheep thou can'st tear from the embrace of the shepherd's arms. In the name of our God we defy thee and shout in thy face

"Once in Christ in Christ for ever,
Nothing from His love can sever."

I know not how you feel, beloved but the thought that eleven years ago God did for my soul what all hell and sin can never undo, fills me with a bliss that rises beyond all expression, and makes every corner of my heart to echo song.

Fifthly. *He has done that for my soul which brings more glory to His name than all His other works.* All his works praise Him. There is not a flower that blooms, or bird that sings, or wave that rides the ocean deep, but what is vocal with his praises. But richer far the tribute of glory He reaps from salvation's field. The stars of grace shine with a brighter lustre round his throne than those that stud with points of light the midnight sky. The trees of his right hand planting more loudly clap their hands than all the monarchs of earth's forests. God's glory is great in our salvation. He looks upon us as the master-pieces of his love and power, and will before assembled worlds exhibit *us* as the grandest trophies heaven contains For saith Paul, He hath "made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; *that in the ages to come He might shew the*

exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us." Just as in ancient baronial castles we have seen the walls adorned with trophies eloquent of the prowess of the warriors of the middle ages, so heaven is God's grand trophy room, and sinners saved the trophies. To them He points as proofs of what eternal grace *can* do, and from them a never ceasing revenue of glory flows unto the throne. Lo, there the foremost of the throng and loudest in his song, the once apostle of the Gentiles stands. Chief of sinners—chief of saints—and chief of songsters now. And there I see Manasseh, who made "the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do worse than the heathen," bowing before the footstool of Him whose altars once he spurned. And there John Bunyan, the black sinner and the bright dreamer, and by his side John Newton—the African blasphemer—the consecrated preacher—but now the immortal singer.

Sixthly. He *hath done that for my soul which I am able to know is done.* If a man does not know what God has done for his soul there is some reason to believethat nothing has yet been done. Is conversion so minute a matter, so small a change that it can only be detected by the most delicate tests, and then never to a certainty? Nonsense. That is a poor kind of conversion that only remains a trembling hope and never developes into a conscious fact. Is being in a dark pit with feet sinking in the clay so like standing on a rock with the fresh air of heaven blowing on you that it is impossible or difficult to tell the difference? Is blindness so much like sight that the two can become confounded? Is corruption so near akin to life and health, that to distinguish between them is a perplexity? Could not the leper know himself cleansed, or rather could he help knowing it? Certainly not. Yet all these changes are insignificant and imperceptible compared with the change effected by what God does for the soul. Think not then that it is a want of humility on your part to know and declare the work done in you and for you. Strong faith is the truest humility, and unbelief the greatest presumption. I will show you how. God says "he that believeth *hath* everlasting life." Well, replies a soul "I do believe, but I should not like to say I have everlasting life." Do you see what that soul is doing in its false humility? *It is making God a liar.* True humility says "Lord, it seems almost too good to be true that such a wretch as I should be possessed of such a gift, but I dare not doubt Thy word, and therefore I believe it."

Seventhly, and but for a moment. *He has done for my soul that which will bear the test of eternity.* I have already rather anticipated myself on this point by what I said about the impossibility of the work ever being undone, yet there is much more that may be said. The work done in our souls is often severely tested on earth, but it stands all and never appears more grandly real than when tested the most. This thought has been deeply impressed upon me by the life and experience of our dear drother Inch, who has just gone home. For months he had been a dying man, and for weeks he had anticipated every day to be his last. If ever the work of God in a soul was put to a severe strain it was in his case; and if ever there was a triumphant manifestation of its power it was was in that bed room at Walthamstow. Those of

us who were privileged to see the sight will never forget it or cease to bless God for it. Day by day—week by week—month by month it stood the test, seeming to grow stronger and more glorious the longer it was tried, until at last it culminated, when—in answer to a question from me as to whether there was anything we could do for him—he replied "sing

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, &c."

And then when all found a difficulty in commencing the tune through emotion, with a great effort led it himself, heaven shining in his face as he sung. Ah friends, that is something real that is done in the soul which enables a man to go down to the river of death singing his doxology. But the song death cannot quench, eternity cannot wear out. There are myriads in heaven this evening who have been enjoying its bliss for ages, and still the subject matter of their song is, what God hath done for their souls. "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him be glory for ever." And when this world has passed away and a million ages rolled their courses, still, outliving all time and all matter, the song shall be heard fresh as when first it burst from the Psalmist's lips "Come and hear and I will declare what God hath done for my soul." Thus have I tried, poor and imperfectly I know, to tell the wondrous tale of what God hath done for me and hundreds more that hear me.

II. A FEW REASONS THAT WARRANT TELLING THE TALE. As the tale itself is the chief matter, I have devoted almost all my time to telling it, so I shall have to be very brief in giving the reasons that warrant my so doing. First then let me say that *saints in all ages have done the same.* That David did so our text declares. That Paul did the same we have abundant testimony. He seemed ever ready to tell the simple story in all places and before all classes of people. Throughout all his epistles the same thing shines. He never forgets his own salvation. Glistening like little gems in a setting of gold are those personal allusions. "I obtained mercy." "Of whom I am chief." "By the grace of God I am, what I am." The two men whose names I have previously linked with his were one with him in the practice. How many souls have thanked God for "GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS, OR A BRIEF RELATION OF THE EXCEEDING MERCY OF GOD IN CHRIST TO HIS POOR SERVANT, JOHN BUNYAN." Who has not heard the anecdote of good John Newton, who when advised because of his years to stop preaching replied, "I cannot stop. What, shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can speak." Surely that must be right which the holiest in all ages have loved to do. There are also *inward promptings* that compel the lips to tell the tale. It is not only true that the saint *may* tell of mercy found, but it is equally true that he *must*. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. Had Christ laid an embargo upon us not to tell the tale, I think we must have told it just the same. How can a man keep silence when his heart is brimful of a subject? He feels he must out with it or die Now as these strong desires come when we are nearest in heart to God, surely they go far to prove that telling the tale is in accordance with his mind. Tell it, for it is *a good thing for ourselves.*

Too often we forget that we have been purged from our old sins; the day of our conversion grows dim in the distance and our heart's love loses its fervour and intensity. The fire becomes caked over and gives out but little heat. Tell the tale, and in telling it, old memories spring into fresh life. The fire is stirred, its hardening crust is broken and the flames leap out as bright as ever. O, it is a grand thing for one's own soul to live over again the day of conversion. Tell it, *it is the best argument with sinners.* The world can understand a fact far better than a theory. Cannot we all? A man may come to me with a prescription which he declares just suited to my disease, and may bring forward a hundred reasons why it should result in cure, but his words will have a thousand fold power if he adds "I know it will, for I was dying with the same complaint, I took it and see what it has done for me." Friends, with no egotism I trust, I can humbly bear my testimony to the truth of this. It has been my joy to see nearly one thousand persons about their souls, and my experience is, that when everything else has failed the simple recital of what God has done for my soul has won the day. Here then, is work for all. Do you say "I could never preach a sermon or speak a word in public," perhaps not; but there is one thing you can do—yea must do, if you would be clear of the blood of souls—you can take a fellow sinner by the hand and quietly and gently tell him about what the love of Christ has done for you. O, keep it not a secret—it is too good to be unknown—tell it and you may win a soul. I will close by asking a question and making a proclamation. The question is a solemn one. Answer it, I implore you. It is this. WHAT HAS GOD DONE FOR YOUR SOUL? I think I hear some sadly answer "nothing yet." But would you like to know what He is *willing* to do for it? Then listen to the proclamation. In the name of my God I declare, that though it be filthy, He is willing to cleanse it—though it be guilty, He is willing to pardon it—though it be lost, He is willing to save it—though it wants everything, He is willing to do all for it. God, in His mercy grant that every one in this congregation may at last be able to say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for *my* soul"—Amen.

Scripture read—Psalm lxvi.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book"—684—422—548.

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East London Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHITE SUNDAY.

(Or what our Churches need.)

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 19TH, 1872, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT THE EAST LONDON TABERNACLE.

"What meaneth this?"—Acts ii—12.

THIS was a question that leaped from the lips of thousands, and was asked in almost every then-known language under the sun. We marvel not at the amazement that prompted the question. We should have equally wondered and asked the same explanation had we been one of the throng. There was a new thing on the earth—a marvellous thing—an inexplicable thing—a thing not to be accounted for by any human reasoning. A company of illiterate and obscure persons, several of them having been formerly fishermen, was now to be seen preaching in languages which a few minutes before were unknown to any of them. It must have been a sight strange beyond all description. Here were men who did not know the alphabets of the languages five minutes back, declaring with fluency the wonderful works of God. Words of burning eloquence were pouring from their lips in a tongue the very existence of which was perhaps unknown to them until they began to speak it. Here was a royal road to learning indeed. What did it mean? Where did they acquire their instantaneous knowledge? Who gave it them? What did it portend? All kinds of explanations were hazarded, and amongst them the stupid one that the men were drunk. Had they been, the marvel would have been none the less, for drunkenness generally makes it difficult to speak one language, not easy to speak many. Satan will give any explanation of God's work, however preposterous, rather than allow the authorship to remain unchallenged. The simple explanation of the marvel was, that an ascended Christ had performed His promise—poured out of His Spirit, and given gifts to men. For ten days the disciples had been praying and waiting for the power from on high, and now it had come. Through their midst had gone "the sound of a mighty rushing wind." On their heads had rested tongues of lambent flame. Over the assembly a new spirit had been breathed. They were different men, though the same. From that baptism of the Holy Ghost they came up giants. The timid spirit was made brave, the faltering steadfast, and on those lips through which the simplest Galilæan brogue had only passed, were words of wisdom, and of power, none could dare gainsay. Yes, the blessing had come. "Pentecost" will ever be associated with the outpouring of the Spirit, and "Pentecostal" will ever remain the best description of great revival work.

This is Whit-Sunday the church and world declare, and it is being kept in a variety of ways. But what is Whit-Sunday? It is simply a contraction of "White-Sunday." Centuries back the primitive church used to have a great baptism on this particular day. The candidates (as the word implies) were dressed in white—hence the origin of the name. This is the day when the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost is commemorated. Alas, how has the word become corrupted and dragged in the mire. Whitsuntide!! How little is there now in that word to suggest white-robed saints professing their Saviour's name. Whitsuntide!! It suggests debauchery and drunkenness, more than baptism and blessing. Whit-Sunday!! It is the Sunday most removed from being a 'white' one. Did ye mark the crowds of shouting Sabbath-breakers as ye came? You know what the road will be like when you return. It is black Sunday, and to-morrow will be to tens of thousands blacker Monday. Let us thank God if by His grace we have learned to find our joy in Him, and let us seek this evening to get our own souls revived, as we meditate on the marvels of that day, which made a wondering multitude exclaim, "What meaneth this?"

I shall first notice *three things immediately preceding the outpouring of the Spirit*—then *the blessing itself*—and lastly *I shall try and answer in a few words the question of our text.*

I. Notice THREE THINGS IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT. In looking upon the assembled group of disciples, I can see three things which if not the direct cause of a revival, always precede and herald it. They are the shadows cast by the coming blessing. They are like "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees" that told David it was time to "bestir himself." I see first in that gathering a *complete congregation.* In the first verse of the chapter you read "they were *all* in one place." No absentees. None away. Now this betokened earnestness, for it was rather early in the morning. The Spirit had come and Peter had commenced his notable sermon before nine o'clock in the morning, for he says, "it is but the third hour of the day. It was in fact an early Sunday morning prayer meeting, and every one of the company was present. Glorious fact, I am not so surprised now at what followed. Always before a great blessing there will be a revived interest on the part of christians in the services of the sanctuary. The half truth, "I can worship God as well at home," (which is a lie when the man is *able* to come to the Sanctuary and does not) will not be heard. Zion's palaces will possess a beauty in the eyes of Zion's children, whilst their tongues will sing, "I was glad when it was said unto me, let us go up into the house of the Lord." When there, no weariness will be felt, no longing desire for the worship to conclude, and the benediction dismiss them. No! they cry "our feet shall *stand* within thy gates, O Jerusalem." There will be a trooping to the house of the Lord, and the "tribes" will go up in company. Indifference to the public worship of our God is a fatal sign. Where there are numbers of absentees there is but little probability of having a "white" Sunday. But, O Sirs, is it not lamentable to find what trifles often serve to keep "all'

from being gathered together? How many sanctuaries there are where the members are most conspicuous by their absence, and what a shame the cause of the absence often is. Things that would never be permitted to interfere one moment with a business transaction, or delay one minute an anticipated pleasure, are reckoned sufficient to warrant "staying at home to-day." Thousands of professors treat Christ as they would never dare to treat their fellows, and never think of treating themselves. Out of such a multitude present I have no doubt I am hitting somebody when I say, "Friend, you found *eleven* o'clock this morning too early to come to worship, but I will guarantee you catch the *eight* o'clock excursion train tomorrow morning. You have no intention of missing that if you did your Saviour's worship although it requires a three hours earlier start. O the once-a-day worshippers *who might be more*, they are a blot on the church, and betoken a lack of spiritual life. But let the blessing come, and before the full power of the revival sweeps through the church, there will be a near approach to a complete congregation; all being present who possibly can. This is the first thing I notice as immediately preceding the outpouring of the Spirit.

But secondly I see *a congregation one in desire and motive*. They were not only all there, but all there "with one accord." No two motives had drawn them. They came to receive the promised blessing. That and nothing else than that had brought them from their homes to the early morning meeting. Go, ask them "what seek ye here?" They all answer "the Comforter." The prayer of one was the prayer of all, the expectation of one the expectation of all. Every heart was giving the same echo. They were banded, welded together, in their common desire. Ah, I marvel not now at anything that may happen. A church all present and all agreed may expect anything, dare anything, accomplish anything, receive anything. Is not the want of this spirit of accord, the weakness of the churches of the present day? In putting my finger on this do I not indicate the secret disease that preys on Zion? Is not this it which robs her of her bloom—enervates her strength—gives paralysis to her arm, and worst of all, hinders the blessing falling, and makes the sky above her head hot and dry as brass? Unbelief is not the only thing that keeps Christ from doing many mighty works. It might with equal truth be said of many a church "He did not many mighty works there because of their squabbling, petty, selfish spirit." They never come with one accord and therefore never have a Pentecostal season. It is sad beyond description, to see the paltry pride and miserable jealousies that find their way within the courts of the Lord's House. *There are men who will be nothing unless they are everything, and will without compunction sacrifice a whole church's prosperity upon the wretched little altar of their own unsanctified ambition.* Instead of all being baptized into one spirit, it looks more as if every one had been baptized into a different spirit and every spirit an evil one. Doubtless some of you may think this is rather an over-drawn picture. All I can say is "I would to God it was," but we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. With all our heart have we pitied the pastor of these "units." We have felt he was engaged in a well nigh hopeless struggle. Whilst these fruits of the flesh "emulations,

variances, wrath and strife," hang on the boughs of any church, there can be no *White*-Sunday for the preacher, there can be no Peter's success in winning souls. But when the reverse is seen, then rejoice, for the dawn of the White-Sunday breaketh. When one desire spreads from heart to heart and that the desire of greater holiness and more conversions—when all differences become drowned in one overwhelming passion and that the passion of saving souls, then let the church lift up her head for the day of her revival draweth nigh. Pentecost has *almost* fully come. The sacred tide has risen to the very top of the bank, it must sweep over directly. Oh beloved members of this church let us see to it that we be more than ever of one accord. Thanks, ten thousand thanks be unto God, that for years we have been knit together, not as a society but as a family. Never was there truer love or more determined union in any church, yet, I cannot doubt but that hidden away among nearly one thousand members, there are some evil feelings and unworthy bickerings. Is it so? Can it be dear friend that but for *your* want of accord the blessing would be even greater than it is? O, away with it!! In spirit let us now grasp hands and Pentecost shall come again. I pray God, that riding over the revival we have had for five years there may come another. A wave leaping on wave, bearing all opposition down. May the sacred flood roll and rise, rise and roll, until it sweeps like a deluge over the topmost peaks of the mountains of our selfishness. Drowning all our littlenesses and bearing this church upon its bosom, high and higher still until it floats, like the ark of old, above the highest hills.

The third thing I see is *a congregation steeped in the spirit of prayer*. This I gather from the previous chapter. Kindly turn with me to the fourteenth verse and you will read "these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." This was directly after the ascension of our Lord. Ten days have passed since then. They are praying still. *They had a ten days prayer meeting.* Do you wonder they had a white Sunday? I should have wondered if they had not. Here I wish to speak with all the plainness possible, for God knows we are in earnest about this matter. *Fearless of any contradiction, I assert that the general prayerlessness of the church is simply deplorable, dreadful, humiliating.* I would that I could find stronger language to describe the evil. It cannot well be exaggerated. Here and there exceptional cases are to be seen where the hundreds come to prayer. But take the general run of prayer meetings. Drop in on a Monday night and at most sanctuaries what do you behold? A paltry forty or fifty out of a church of four hundred members, and half of these perhaps are members of the congregation and not of the church at all. It is not an uncommon thing for churches to have to give up prayer meetings because so few come, and hold a half preaching and half praying meeting in the middle of the week. *In the majority of Churches, the prayer meeting is a disgrace*, and whilst this remains it is of no use talking about having a revival in the world. O, that a cry might go through the land "to your knees, to your knees, O daughter of Zion," for until she does, no blessing will come. Members of this church, let not your prayerfulness decline. The

Pentecostal blessing we are now enjoying may be traced to our gatherings for prayer. It is not alone the preaching, it is nothing of the man, it is your praying that has won the day. For five years you have flocked to the prayer meetings, as the world does to its pleasures. I implore you, as you would have a second Pentecost still pray. Let everything else go rather than the meetings for pleading with God. Think! Might not the blessing here be trebled by more prayer? We have not yet had all our God can give us. He still waits with both hands full. Then pray—pray—pray. Whilst meditating upon this subject in my study yesterday, the fire burned within, desires too big for utterance filled me. Restlessly I paced the room, thinking what God's church *might* have if it would only band itself to pray, and with one accord determine to give heaven no rest until the day of Pentecost gladdens this century. I could not study, but I wept and cried "O God, do make to-morrow a White Sunday in that Tabernacle," and then (was it Utopian?) I thought I heard my sighs echoed by you—the same fire of longing desire burned hot within you—and you said "we will have a second Pentecost if we have ten days of prayer to get it." O sirs, the blessing is ours if we like to take it. It is but a matter of waiting. God cannot withhold from a seeking people. If we get it not one day let us pray the next, and the next, and the next, but get it. May this spirit of prayer—this pioneer of revival, be ours now and ever as a church. Thus have I tried to show you the three things immediately preceding the out-pouring of the Spirit. Let these three things be found in any church and the certain result is "Pentecost."

II. LET US NOTICE THE BLESSING ITSELF. I observe first *that it came at an appointed time.* It was "when the day of Pentecost was fully come." God has a time for everything. Never is He one moment behind that time, nor ever a second before.

The disciples doubtless, expected the blessing sooner. They had to learn what we have, that there is *a sovereignty in revivals.* Man has no power to command one. He can but cry and wait. The sovereignty displayed in the salvation of individual souls, is not more marked than in the revival of churches. In both cases "one is taken and the other left," and the only reason faith can give is "even so Father, for it seemed good in Thy sight." Over one church a cloud of blessing hangs, continually letting fall showers of refreshment. Beneath its influence all is verdant, fresh and lovely. The saints are joyous, with the dew of their youth abiding upon them. On every hand young converts are springing up like flow'rets. The music of the river of God is heard flowing through the place, and the time of the singing of birds seems always there. Every sermon bears its fruit. Every class yields its tribute. The church meetings have the joy of heaven in them, as case after case of returning prodigals is reported. The whole is like a golden harvest field, and the song of the reapers rings out far and wide. But yonder is another church the very contrast to this. The heavens above it seem as brass—and no cloud as big as a man's hand can be discerned. The piety of its members seems to lack freshness and their leaf withers. Converts are almost unknown. Everything droops, specially the spirit of the pastor. How is it that in one place all is fertility and the other

sterility? The answer cannot always be given by pointing to any one thing possessed by the former church and wanting in the latter. Some time back I heard a statement made by a brother minister, that I felt compelled to take exception to, he said "that if the minister's heart was right with God, there would sure to be a revival in his church." Ah, friends, I know many whose hearts are right with God, and who are walking a life of fellowship with a risen Christ I have admired and envied, who yet see but little blessing on their labours. I have heard them cry and seen them weep over the coldness of their churches, and wept with them as they prayed over and over again, "O Lord, do revive thy work in thy church." Let not those churches that have the blessing, despise those that lack it. The only difference is that the time to favour them "*has* come and the time to favour the others *shall* come." I speak not here of those cold and highly respectable churches which never had a revival, never want one and in all probabilty never will have one, but of those churches where though little blessing is seen there is intense desire and prayer for more. It was mercy to the greatest number that delayed the desired blessing. God was waiting until Jerusalem was at its fullest. Whilst the disciples in the upper room were praying, troops of persons were flocking into the city. God was heaping the fuel for the fire to fall on. It was worth waiting for such a grand result.

Observe secondly that the blessing came *suddenly and in a moment.* Revivals very often do. I believe generally. With man's work the process as well as the result is visible. Is a temple to be built, the plans are exhibited, the foundations dug out—the scaffolding reared, and for months the chipping of the stone-mason's chisel and the clicking of the bricklayer's trowel are heard. God can build His temple in a night, and like Solomon's, no sound of tool be heard. At any moment, without any previous warning the revival may come. Had I time I could give many a proof of this from the history of the church in all ages, but I forbear and only mention one instance, the remembrance of which must ever be precious to us as a church. Do you remember a handful meeting in a small sanctuary in this neighbourhood? Do you remember how quickly it became the thousand, and now the thousand has become three thousand? Can we ever forget that Sunday evening over five years ago, when the blessing swept through the place which has remained with us ever since? This church then had her White Sunday. Thank God, many a one since.

Note, thirdly, that *the blessing spread far and wide.* If it commenced with the disciples it did not end with them. From the upper room it soon flew along the streets of Jerusalem like an electric current. The crowds gather—they surge around the building—curiosity is aroused and all cry "what meaneth this?" Peter preaches. The power goes abroad. The right-hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. Three thousand find out what a revival means. O, Sirs, there is no telling where the influence of a revival in a church may spread. It finds its way where nothing else will. It creeps into homes shut against the tract distributor. It glides into darkest places of vice. It penetrates the whole neighbourhood. A revived church will be certain to draw

the multitude together. Let but a revival come and the dreary waste of empty pews to be seen in many a sanctuary will be gone. This is the secret of getting at the masses. Our churches do not want cleverer or better ministers but *revived* ones. Our ministers do not want richer or more respectable churches but *revived* ones. A revived pastor and a revived people, and no building will be too large for the congregation that will gather. A revived church is a magnetic power. The people *must* come to it. If, beloved, God should but give us from this evening a fresh out-pouring of His Spirit, the blessing will not stay here—Bow, Limehouse, Ratcliff, all the neighbourhood will come beneath the power. Should our God but let fall a spark from heaven's altar into our midst to-night, quick as in the dry prairie, the flames shall run along the ground until far and wide there shall glow a belt of living, purifying, blessed fire. O God, do.

III. Thirdly and briefly I WILL TRY AND ANSWER THE QUESTION OF OUR TEXT. "What meaneth this?" Why, it means that *Christ is ascended.* It means that the glorious prophecy has come to pass. "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." What meaneth this? It means that Jesus of Nazareth the despised of the people—He, who died a felon's death—is Lord and Christ and sits on high, head over all things unto His church.

Do you not think dear friends that an ascended Christ is too much overlooked by the churches of this day? "Lovely mournful Calvary," must never be separated from the throne of honor; nor He who stooped to death from Him, who is highly exalted. AN ASCENDED, GLORIFIED CHRIST, WARRANTS THE CHURCH IN EXPECTING ANY MEASURE OF BLESSING, ANY NUMBER OF CONVERSIONS. "What meaneth this"? *It means that all instrumentality is nothing without the Holy Ghost, but that the meanest instrumentality with the Spirit is mighty enough to accomplish anything.* Alas, what an amount of powerless machinery we have in the so-called "religious world." Powerless, because it has no unction. Powerless, because it is the work of man, not the working of God through the man. Powerless, because it is dry and official. Powerless, because it is done by men who have never "tarried until they were endued with power from on high." Instrumentality is almost worshipped, whilst the Holy Ghost is well-nigh ignored. O, would to God that it were more realized by us all that apart from the blessed Spirit our acquirements and preparations, are nothing and can do nothing. God's church is hindered not helped by instrumentality that lacks the Holy Ghost. But see what the Spirit *can* do by the feeblest means. As a sermon, Peter's discourse had nothing about it to account for the extraordinary results that followed; but *God was in it* and that accounts for everything.

White Sundays will come in all our churches when the Holy Ghost is more honoured, when unction takes the place of mere oratory and witnessing for Jesus the place of frozen proprieties. "What meaneth this?" *It means that God is pleased to work on the world through the church.* Far be it from us to call in question the good that has been

accomplished by many of our "societies," but we believe that half of them could be spared with ease did a greater unction but rest upon the church. Societies composed of the church and world combined, never seem to me to be very likely to have a Pentecost, and as the Holy Ghost only dwells in the church, it is to the church we must look to do the work of God. Worldly co-operation, though it bring wealth, will bring a more than counter-balancing weakness. "What meaneth this?" It means that these are the seasons, God's church is to seek at His hands. I will close with an illustration. In the early part of this week I was standing upon the sea shore, watching with great interest the "getting off" of a fishing smack. I saw in it a union of work and dependence that charmed me. The fishermen brought the craft down the beach as far as they could and then left her awhile until the tide which was flowing neared her. Meantime two anchors had been cast out to sea, from which were ropes to a windlass in the centre of the vessel. Soon the surf (for the sea was fresh) began to run round her as she lay a dead weight upon the shore. Then the waves began to curl over and break upon her side. The men at the windlass took a turn and made the rope taut. And now every moment the tide had more power over her. She was never still. Twenty times did I say "now she is off;" and twenty times did she settle down again upon the shore, and twenty times did the men at the windlass put on the strain. Of course they got a drenching, but then men don't mind that when they want to get a vessel off. At last one wave swept higher than any before; she shook—rose—glided down towards the deep—the men turning the handle of the windlass quickly as possible. A wave she met threatened to sweep her back upon the shore, but the anchors held her, and right through the surf the men wound her, and half-an-hour after she was flying away before the breeze, a very contrast to the dead weight she looked upon the beach. Friends, that vessel is the church. The Holy Ghost is the tide. The ropes and the windlass are human agencies only to be used in dependance on the tide. The tide is coming in. The church feels its power. She moves—she rises. O God send the billow that shall float her *now*, and send her careering on her course, and careening with the breeze of the Spirit. Let us now conclude by a united cry to God to make this day a White Sunday to us all.

A few minutes were then spent in earnest entreaty for a revival. The involuntary "Amens" that broke from the assembly told of intense desire for the blessing, and were to us a token of its near approach. Let us still pray until it comes and spreads to all the churches of this neighbourhood.

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN.

Scripture read—Acts ii.

Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book"—144—145—959.

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East London Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST'S OWN JOY OUR JOY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 9TH, 1872, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,
AT THE EAST LONDON TABERNACLE.

"And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves."—JOHN xvii, 13.

THE precious words of this prayer, and of the three previous chapters, become invested with a sad but additional charm when read in the light of the first verse of the following chapter, "when Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which He entered and His disciples." The shadow of Gethsemane was falling across His spirit when His lips uttered that beautiful discourse commencing "let not your hearts be troubled" and concluding with the words "these things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The cup of exceeding bitterness was already being held out to Him as He prayed, not for Himself, but for His disciples.

What an exquisite view have we here of our Saviour's character. How grandly does the unselfishness of love shine forth! How completely does His own approaching sorrow fail to make Him unmindful of the woes of others. With most, grief gives rise to a half pardonable selfishness. It absorbs our every thought. With Him it was the very reverse. The nearer His own heart-breaking approached, the more concerned He seemed to comfort the hearts of others. His own Gethsemane but intensified His desire for His people's joy. "Let not *your* hearts be troubled." Ah Jesus, dost Thou think of the little griefs of Thy disciples now? In such a moment as this can'st Thou pause to pour drops of comfort into wounded spirits? With the Atlantic waves of the travail of Thy soul so near Thee, hast Thou time or heart to think of the minor griefs of others? "Let not your hearts be troubled!!" Why, Saviour, Thy heart is about to break. "Be of good cheer!!" O my Lord, in a few hours Thou wilt be crying as one forsaken on the cross. "I know it" He seems to say, "and it is because I know it that I would make my last discourse to commence and end with words of peace. If I have sorrow, I wish them joy." The same lovely trait of a perfect character gleams forth in the prayer from which I have selected the text. How few are the petitions He offers for Himself compared with those He breathes for others. To read this seventeenth of John one would never think the bloody sweat was immediately to succeed. Love to His followers completely triumphs over personal suffering. It is worthy of notice how much stress Christ

puts upon his disciples having a *present* joy, and that joy *His* joy. In the fifteenth chapter and eleventh verse you read "these things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." In the sixteenth chapter and twenty-fourth verse, "ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full," and in the words of our text, "my joy fulfilled in themselves." What does Christ mean when He wishes *His* joy to be in His disciples? This will be our subject this morning. There are one or two interpretations. I will but mention them and then go on to what I believe to be the true teaching of the words. Many think that the joy here mentioned is the joy of which Jesus is the author, subject, and medium. The joy that comes through accepting Him—His joy because He gives it. All these are true, but I do not think they are the truths taught by this verse. I believe that Jesus by the words "my joy" meant the joy that He Himself experienced. The joy that He had in His soul whilst fulfilling His mission on earth. Directly after expressing this wish you will find that He commences drawing a comparison between His disciples and Himself. First in their nature, "they are not of the world even as I am not of the world." Secondly in their mission, "as Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." What more suitable prayer could He then have possibly uttered than this, that as they were to go forth for Him even as He went forth for the Father, so they might have the same joy to sustain and cheer them as He had? Like Him in the treatment they were to receive from the world, He desired they should be like Him in their inward joy. Our theme then is Christ's own joy the portion of Christ's own people. Let us find out the nature of our Saviour's joy, and we shall find out the joy which we may, we ought, which Christ wishes us to possess. Let us then first notice the nature of Christ's joy, and secondly, the measure in which He wishes His saints to have it.

I. The Nature of Christ's Joy. I would draw a distinction between the joy of Christ, and what often goes by that name. Joy is something different from mere merriment and hilarity, although the word is often used to describe them. Neither of these can I imagine dwelling in the heart of Him who was "the man of sorrows," but I can joy. I willingly grant that often merriment is the outward and visible sign of an inward joy of heart, but it is not always necessarily so. It may be the lovely flower of a plant that has its roots deep within the soul, or it may have no more connexion with the heart than the flowers have with the coffin lid on which they have been cast. Often where there is most laughter there is most grief, and frequently where there are most tears there is the deepest joy. The joy of Jesus was not that then that every eye could see. It certainly was not the mirthfulness that plays over the countenance. To have looked into His face would not have been to see joy mirrored. It was more marred than that of the sons of men, and deep were the furrows care had ploughed. Christ became—if I may use the expression—prematurely old. When only a little over thirty years of age he was thought by his looks to be nigh fifty, for the Jews said unto him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham." If it was a joy not strongly expressed in the countenance, it was also a joy not easily detected by His conversation. In his recorded discourses we have no sparkling

coruscations of mirthfulness, investing them with brilliancy, but rather a spirit of calm sadness. Only once I think I am correct in saying is Jesus stated to have rejoiced, and of that I shall have to speak shortly. I distinguish then between joy and merriment. Perhaps I can better explain my meaning by an illustration. Very often when travelling in our own lovely Lake District and on the Continent last year, I have made my way to some secluded glen. In front of me there have been rocks piled on rocks, and jutting out from between them pine trees that hung their heads over the abyss. Far up, tumbling over the topmost crag, was a mountain torrent. In its fall it laughed with silvery voice, and sprang upward from the rock on which it fell, in a thousand glittering drops of spray, and then descended on the quivering ferns that bent their heads as if in gratitude. It eddied at my feet, whirled round and round in the deep pool, and then rushed away over the brow of another precipice, and was lost to sight. There you have a picture of merriment. Often very beautiful—seldom very deep—never the same for long together. Let but three weeks or a month of drought set in, and where will be the stream? Dry are the rocks, empty the pool, unpicturesque its channel, whilst the ferns, withered and prostrate, seem as if they mourned their trust in so fickle a friend. But joy is the river still and deep. It makes not the noise —it lacks perhaps much of the attractiveness—but on its breast it bears the commerce of a nation, whilst quietly it says "I flow on for ever."

Observe also that the joy of Jesus was not one *extracted from surrounding circumstances.* With too many of us our joy is distilled from our circumstances, and consequently if those circumstances be adverse, we are destitute of happiness. Our joy like honey is gathered "from every opening flower." We flit like the bee from one bloom of earth to another, and are dependent upon what they may contain. Now view the circumstances that surrounded our Lord, and see if in any of them you can discover the secret source of that joy which He declared He had. What were His surroundings? The answer is soon given. Poverty—reproach—betrayal—anticipated death. Are these the flowers that yield the honey of joy? Many of you know what poverty means —can you coin joy out of it? You know what reproach is—do you find it a fount of sweetness or bitterness? You have been betrayed—do you like it? With us death is in a great measure an unknown thing, and the time of it is uncertain, but remember that with Jesus every pain was foreknown, and all the agony and shame forefelt, and yet He had so deep a joy that He prayed that His joy might fill His disciples. Assuredly then, it was not the joy gleaned from surroundings. What was it? *It was a joy that had its fount deep within the soul.* A joy that having nothing to do with outside circumstances in its birth, was uninfluenced by them—distinct altogether from them. It was not a joy that flowed *into* the soul through the channel of the senses. The tide flowed the other way. It flowed *out* from the soul. Here is one of the great differences between the joy of the Christian and the joy of the worldling. The latter drinks in nearly all his joy through the senses. The child, lovely and beloved, sends joy into the heart through the channel of the sight. Music comes stealing through the corridors of the ear—joy comes with it. The scent of the rose awakens

pleasure, and taste and touch alike become the instruments of happiness. The Christian like his Master has all these, but *the* joy of his heart is the joy that rises there independently of all outside things. The joy which like himself is born from above. This joy is not confined to any one place. I cannot leave it, it cannot leave me, being in me it journeys with me anywhere. If my bliss be derived from certain surroundings, then leave those surroundings, and I leave my joy. But if my bliss be unconnected with any thing without, it goes with me. It becomes my travelling companion. My soul sings

> "I hold by nothing here below;
> Appoint my journey, and I go;
> Though pierced by scorn, oppressed by pride,
> I feel Thee good—feel nought beside."

Being an inward joy it may be had under any and every circumstance, yea, it is a joy that will thrive where any other joy would perish. It is the chamois of the Alps, that leaps like the hind of the morning where others cannot walk, and finds its food where most would starve. The only difficulty would be to say where it cannot and where it has not grown. It has sprung up between the stone slabs of the dungeon floor, and made the prison a conservatory. It has flourished in poverty until the inhabitant of the palace has envied. It has lived in the flames of martyrdom, and made the tongue sing when almost all beside was charred and blackened. It is a joy that lives in the fountains of the great deep of the soul.

So much for the joy of Christ being an inward one. Let us now go more into particulars, and see what was the nature of this inward joy, or the different channels in which it flowed. I observe, first, that it was *the joy of communion*. Our Saviour ever had an abiding sense of His Father's nearness, and deep, beyond all description, must have been the fellowship between them. You find Him taking comfort in this thought in the last verse but one of the previous chapter. Saith He, "Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; and yet *I am not alone*, because the Father is with me." Here is one of the fountains of His joy. O, who shall tell what that communion was He held during all the hours of the night upon the mountain side. What tongue could venture to describe those meetings of the Father and Son? Imagination shrinks back. The place is too holy for human thought to venture nigh. What words of perfect intimacy and restful love must have floated on the night air, whilst methinks that at a distance the angels circled that praying one, silent in presence of a fellowship surpassing theirs, as far as He who prayed was more excellent than they. It was in these seasons, when all the world was steeped in sleep, that the man of sorrows had His joy. It was whilst the dew fell thick upon His locks, refreshment came into His soul. He was with His Father. This was His joy. And everywhere He went, unseen to mortal eye, was the eternal Father by His side. His ears heard words the world knew nothing of. It was to them He listened. "He hath a devil" shouts the angry mob. "My beloved son" whispers the Father's voice. Joy was His. "Away with Him, He is not fit to live," roars a brutal populace. "In whom I am well pleased" says a voice from heaven. The inward joy was deep. Then from that heart went forth

returning words of love, and so "They talked together by the way." Child of God, this joy of Christ's may be our joy also. We may drink from the same fount, and find refreshment through the same means. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is our Father also, and as He communed with our Elder Brother, so will He with His younger brethren. We may have the same joy—the same in nature if not in degree—as He we love had. He who prayed on mountain side and in night solitude has told us, "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." He who found His joy in prayer and fellowship has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive, that *your* joy may be full." O, beloved, I believe there is a joy in holding intercourse with the Father of which we know but little yet. There is such a thing as carrying about in one's breast a holy of holies. There is such a thing, even in this noisy busy world, as listening to a heavenly voice—sweet contrast to the din around—telling of love and tenderness. Listen to it, and Christ's joy will be fulfilled in you.

Christ's joy was also *the joy of realized and returned love.* Although somewhat near akin to the joy of communion, there is yet—at least to my mind—a shade of difference, which warrants me in placing it by itself. Communion is more a positive act, this an experience. Christ felt his Father's love. This he declares. "The Father loveth the Son." Christ loved the Father. This also He declared. "I love the Father." Now a realized and returned love can only result in joy. Whilst meditating on this, a lovely scene I beheld some time back came to remembrance. It will illustrate my meaning. I was standing on a tongue of land, or rather rocks, with a river on either side of me. Both rivers could be traced for some way back. They came from almost opposite directions. Both of them came leaping and roaring along channels filled with great boulder-stones. Both of them were beautiful to a degree. I turned from one to another with equal delight. They were both born from the clouds, both bright and sparkling, both alike refreshing, but they came from different mountain tops. For many a mile they had each run their lovely course, gradually nearing, until at last their streams met at the foot of the rock on which I stood. The place was called "the meeting of the waters," and marvellous was the "water's music." The two streams embraced, and seemed for a moment or two to dance for very glee, and then blending, ran off no longer separate but one. So I thought I have in this division of my subject the meeting of the waters. The one stream is called "the Father loveth me." The other stream is called "I love the Father." Both are exquisitely lovely. Both are born from above. One flows from the mountain of the Father's house on high. The other from the Rock of Ages. They meet in our subject this morning, and the *music of the meeting of the waters is joy.* A heart beloved and a heart loving must be a heart of joy. This joy was Christ's. This joy may be, should be, must be, ours. The same stream of love that flowed from the Father to the Son, flows from the Father to us. Do you doubt it? Does it seem too great and good to be true? Turn to the twenty-third verse of this chapter, and let the words of Christ assure you of its truth. "I in them and Thou in me, that they may be perfect in one; and that the

world may know that Thou hast sent me, *and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me.*" There you have the one stream full to overflowing. You child of God can say equally with your Saviour, "the Father loveth me." Yes, blessed truth,

"So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be,
The love wherewith He loves the Son,
Such is His love to me."

Now do you not love Him? Cannot you also say, "I love the Father!" Assuredly you can. Then here is the other stream. Both are from above, for your love to God is of God. "We love Him because He first loved us." Then when the waters meet, their music must be joy. O, how often have we felt it so. The love of God has been poured into our heart, perhaps at a prayer meeting. It has flooded our soul. Then it has swollen the stream of our affection, and like an impetuous torrent, we have sung, "If ever I loved Thee my Jesus, tis now." Were we not happy then? Of course we were. There was the meeting of the waters in our breast, and Christ's own joy became our joy.

It was also the joy of *complete surrender*. Here let me ask your very careful attention, for I am persuaded that this is a matter marvellously overlooked by most Christians. Too often it is considered Utopian, visionary and impossible. Whatever may be thought of it now, most assuredly Christ possessed it, and He desired His joy might be fulfilled in us. He had no will contrary to the Father's will, and His obedience to that will was no mere acquiescence, but a positive delight and refreshment. He is sitting on the well side in Samaria, having just revealed Himself to the woman as the Messiah, when His disciples return from their journey to procure food. "Master, eat" they say, knowing He must be weary and faint through long abstinence. Mark His answer, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." Then said the disciples one to another, "Hath any man brought Him aught to eat." Jesus said unto them, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." What food is to our bodies, that obedience was to Christ's soul. Nay, more. It was His luxury. You will remember, that in the earlier part of this discourse, I said I should have cause to refer you to the one occasion when it is recorded that Jesus rejoiced. If you will turn with me to Luke, the tenth chapter and twenty-first verse, you will find these words. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, even so Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Now observe, dear friends, what an abnegation of self there was in this joy. He joyed because the wise and prudent turned their backs upon Him, and the poor and simple received Him. Most court the smile of the great, and had the great man and the wise espoused the Saviour's cause, He would have been considered by the world as a successful preacher, and instead of the cross it would have bestowed the crown. But what would have been a source of sorrow to most, casts a bright gleam of sunshine into the heart of the Man of Sorrows. How is it so? By what process does He extract matter for joy from seeming want of success—a bitter cup to the lips of most?

The answer you have in His own words, "Even so Father." Yes, this was enough for the soul perfectly surrendered. It was the Father's will that so it should be, and therefore it being so, was the Son's joy. O, beloved, would to God we knew more of this joy of perfect and complete surrender. *It is our will clashing with our Father's will that gives disquiet.* Were our will but one with His, it would be utterly impossible for us ever to be anything else than serene, calm and happy. Within our soul would dwell a deep of calm contentedness. Having no choice of our own, the soul would find equal joy in all. The "even so Father" would prove perpetual music in the breast. A soul thus surrendered could make no choice, were it offered. Did the Lord say, "Child, which wilt thou have—health or sickness, a long life, or one snapt in two like a broken column, wealth or poverty?" The soul would answer, "Father, I cannot say, because I know not Thy will, tell me Thy will, and I will tell Thee my choice, for *my will* is Thine, as well as all beside. I refer the case back again to Thee, my Father, and cry:—

I dare not choose my lot,
I would not, if I might;
But choose Thou for me, O my God,
So shall I walk aright."

I know that this is a high standard to attain, and whilst I speak, I feel I am condemning myself in every other word. But shall we ignore a thing because it is above us? No, let us aim high if we reach not the mark, for though our arrow fall short of the target, it shall fly higher than if aimed at a lower object. May the lovely words of Madame Marie Guyon, who, above all, seemed to reach this experience, be made our own:—

While place we seek or place we shun,
The soul finds happiness in none;
But with a God to guide our way,
'Tis *equal* joy to go or stay.

It was the joy of one *who could look back upon a life work finished.* In the fourth verse of this chapter our Saviour says, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." He had given His testimony, preached His sermons, comforted the sorrowing and healed the sick. His life work was finished, though the greatest work, His death work, yet remained. Now as He had been sent upon His mission by the Father, He is about to send His disciples upon their mission work, and He prays that they may have with Him the joy of looking back upon a mission fulfilled and a life work finished. Think not for a moment that I would hint it to be possible with us in *the same degree* as with Him. Far, infinitely far, from it. But in the same relation as our being sent by Him stands to His being sent by the Father, so our joy of a life work finished may stand to His, and the comparison of the missions is Christ's, not mine. "As Thou hast sent me, even so have I sent them." O, friends, it is a high honor to be, in any measure, the means of carrying out the eternal will of Jehovah. When our time of death draws nigh, may we, in some humble degree, be able to look back upon a life not spent in vain, and say—giving all the glory to His name—"I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do." Yet, once more. *It was the joy of approaching glory.* How clearly

does this shine out in the first few words of our text, "and now come I to Thee." "I to Thee!!" Ah, here is joy indeed. In a few brief hours the Sun of Righteousness which was about to set in blood would rise to set no more. The joy which had been before Him for years and which had nerved Him to endure the cross and despise the shame, was now at hand. "I to Thee." Heaven is compressed in those three words, and our loving Lord, ever mindful of his disciples, prays that they may have the same joyful anticipation of nearing glory. Thank God, we may have it and do. Christ's own joy is indeed ours in this respect. His heaven is our heaven—His home our home. Like Him we may stand upon the threshold, and breathe into the Father's ears the same sweet words "I come to Thee." And now but for a moment or two, as our time has gone, let us notice

II. THE MEASURE IN WHICH CHRIST DESIRES HIS SAINTS TO POSSESS THIS JOY. "Fulfilled." What an expressive word have we here. Full, that means filled. Filled, that equals full. Fulfilled is then filled-full. Full to the overflow—filled to the utmost capacity. This is the measure of joy Christ wishes for His disciples. They already possessed it in some degree, but He wished them to have it in a far larger. So He does with us. Jesus would have every disciple of His filled full with His own joy. He would have it rise like a sacred flood until it overflows all banks, and eddies into every nook and cranny of the soul. How are we to obtain this inward bliss? Our text tells us. "*These things I speak* that they might have My joy." It is the word of Jesus that gives this joy. No looking into our own hearts or inspection of our own feelings will avail. That will but empty us. It is reading the thoughts of God towards us in the words of Jesus that sweetly fills us to the full. And O how necessary it is that we should be *filled*. A very simple illustration will show the necessity. Take a bottle but half full of water, and placing your hand over its mouth, shake it. See how the water rushes from end to end as you move it. There is a turmoil within at the slightest motion. Why? Because it is only *half* full. Now fill it until you cannot add another drop. Shake it—all is still within. Turn it upside down—all is quiet. Why is this? Because it is *quite* full, and therefore no outside motion affects it. Child of God, if you and I have only a half measure of this joy every changing circumstance will affect us. Let us be but full of it, and filled with it, and all positions and all circumstances will be alike. Our joy will remain within us. Blessed Jesus, fill us all full of Thine own joy this morning. Amen.

Scripture read—John xvi.
Hymns sung from "Our Own Hymn Book"—684—422—548.

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East London Tabernacle Pulpit.

JANNES AND JAMBRES.

A Sermon,

DELIVERED AT THE EAST LONDON TABERNACLE,

BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN.

"Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth."—II Timothy, iii-8.

"Jannes and Jambres, and whoever are they?" This is a question I can imagine being asked by many, if not most present. Their names only occur in this verse, and nothing is here made known about them except the fact that they were a trouble and obstacle to Moses. All the incidents usually dwelt upon by the biographer are wanting. Nothing is recorded of their birth, appearance, manner of life or time of death. From the fact that they resisted Moses, we know fifteen hundred years must have rolled over their unknown graves. During all this time their names never once appear in inspired history, until in our text they are used as solemn warnings to the professors of Paul's time. But who were they? Jewish records, and all commentators agree in saying, they were the chief of the sorcerers employed by Pharaoh. They were the men who sought to counteract the influence of the miracles of Moses by apparently doing the same things. Kindly turn with me to the seventh chapter of Exodus and the eleventh verse, and you will read the history of that opposition, which centuries after illustrated an apostle's appeal. Moses had just commanded Aaron to cast his rod upon the ground, and that rod has just been changed into a serpent, when "Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers, now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments, for they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents." Here now was a difficulty, and for a moment Moses must have felt non-plussed. In the estimation of the beholders he was nothing more than the magician. The miracle on which perhaps he had greatly depended to give weight to his words had lost all its power. True, he might know that there was reality on his side, and only leger-demain on theirs, but then how about Pharaoh and his court? What effect would the seeming miracle of Jannes and Jambres have upon *their* mind? It could but have one. It would harden them in their sin and take all point and power from the words of Moses. They doubtless argued "what is he more than our own wise men, if he can perform a miracle to get Israel *out* of Egypt, they can perform a similar one to keep them *in* the land, so what is there to choose between them? Thus God's handiwork was brought into discredit by man's imitation. The real suffered through the sham. The truth lost its power by the lie. The appearance neutralized the influence of the reality. Now perhaps

some of you are already saying, "but what has this to do with Paul's argument? Jannes and Jambres had rotted in their graves ages before he mentioned their names." True, but a new race of them was to rise. Paul looking into the future saw the church meeting the same form of opposition as Moses. History was to repeat itself, so he warns of the coming danger. You and I, dear friends, are living "in the last days" that he speaks about in the first verse of this chapter. The days of Jannes and Jambres—so the subject should have special interest with us. Certainly if the Holy Ghost thought it worth while to hold up the opposition of these men, as typical of the opposition the truth is to meet in our times, the study of their character is worthy our most careful thought.

I shall ask you to notice—First, *the nature of the opposition offered by Jannes and Jambres.* Secondly, *its influence.* Thirdly, *its end.* May the Lord help us in preaching on a subject which has long weighed upon our mind. A subject more important than pleasant, and one which we believe to be specially adapted to the present state of our churches. Jannes and Jambres abound just now.

I. First then, LET US NOTICE THE NATURE OF THE OPPOSITION OFFERED BY THESE MEN TO MOSES. It was exceedingly subtle, and had so little show of opposition about it that onlookers might have been slow to believe they had anything but feelings of respect towards Moses. To them it would seem little more than a trial of skill between a Jewish and Egyptian magicians. Here was the power and the danger of the resistance. You do not find that they tried to make light of the miracles of Moses, or call in question their genuineness, or anything of the sort. No, they simply copied him as far as possible, and tried by imitations to depreciate the value of the real. They so surrounded the true diamond with cut glass copies that in the eye of an undiscerning public it was difficult to tell the difference. This is the kind of resistance the church has to struggle against in the present day. The old, rough, brutal, physical opposition has passed away. The Inquisition with its horrid tortures, and Smithfield with its blazing victims, are things of the past. It would be folly on the part of Satan to try and use such weapons now. Their date is over and he knows it. With changing times he always changes his tactics. Like a skilful angler he suits the fly on his hook to the season of the year. Variety, if not pleasing, is profitable to him in this respect. His first effort against Christianity was to *stamp it out*, just as his first effort was to slay Moses. All kinds of means were employed. Edicts, prohibitions, fines, imprisonments, individual torturings, and general massacres. These things suited a certain age, We are now—or at least are supposed to be—more refined, polite and tolerant. The idea of hanging or burning a man for his views, whatever they might be, would be universally scouted, except perhaps by some of the followers of Rome, the members of which church have always shown a great partiality for the faggot as an argument for their faith. The times having thus changed, Satan has accommodated himself to them, and instead of seeking to stamp Christians out, he now goes on an entirely different tack. Having failed to do away with Christians, he now seeks to make the whole world Christian after his sort. Stamping out the genuine having proved an utter failure, he now seeks to swamp them with imitations of his

own manufacture. The church in the world, but not of the world, having outlived all and every attack, is now threatened with a new danger. Satan means to have a Christian world—one at least so in name and profession. As he cannot altogether do away with the testimony of a Moses, he will antidote it by raising up a number like Jannes and Jambres, who shall so closely imitate him that the world shall cry "they are alike, their pretensions are equally good, it is six to one and half a dozen to the other." Satan's last and greatest plan of resistance has been to throw over the world the cloak of a hollow profession, and as far as possible fill the pulpit with a Jannes, and the pew with a Jambres. In the place of living, breathing Christians, he is giving us Christians on canvas, and the church is half-smothered with the shams crowded into her. That this is the true teaching of the text I have no doubt, and that this is the kind of resistance Paul meant Jannes and Jambres to illustrate I am convinced, for if you turn to the fifth verse of this chapter, you will find their characters sketched in very few words, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power." Yes, that is it—formal and powerless. Like Moses in his actions, but devoid of the God-given might by which he performed them.

Let us now enter more into detail. We have seen that the resistance was one of imitation rather than obstruction, and that this is the kind of resistance we may expect to meet. Let us now notice in what particulars the imitation may resemble the real, the empty form appear the genuine power. Observe first that a Jannes or Jambres *can do many of the same things* as a true Moses, and in the judgment of worldly onlookers do them just as well. Aaron's rod is turned into a serpent! Amazement takes hold upon the spectators, until one of the sorcerers with a look of perfect self-assurance casts his rod down, and lo, it becomes a serpent. Others follow his example, until coiling and twisting at Pharaoh's feet, are plenty of proofs that at least in this respect the magicians can do the same as Moses. There need be no great wonderment on our part as to how they accomplished their feat. The Egyptians were masters in the art of conjuring, and as great marvels are done by sleight of hand in our own day. The thing was this, they *did* it—or what is the same as far as their resistance to Moses was concerned—they appeared to do it. Granting that Pharaoh and his court knew it to be but a clever trick on their part, the opposition was the same, for how was Moses to prove that his was anything better. His rod, or more strictly speaking Aaron's rod, became as far as sight could guarantee anything a serpent. So did the rods of Jannes and Jambres. *That* was enough for Pharaoh. Another wonder is done by the rod of Moses and Aaron. It smites the river, and lo, the channel is filled with blood instead of water. Blood—blood—nothing but blood—the whole river stank with blood. Surely now the Egyptians will believe there is power as well as form in Jehovah's messengers. They might have, had it not been for Jannes and Jambres. They turn, or at least they seem to, some water into blood, perhaps a small vessel full. Never mind the quantity. "Water into blood is the same thing whether in a large or small measure," say the Egyptians, "so our magicians are a match for God's Moses." But again the rod works a miracle. From rivers, streams, pools, swamps, ponds, there comes an army of frogs. The land is full of them. In doors as well as out of

doors, there they are. They leap into the beds, they croak in the ovens, they defile the kneading troughs. Horrible! But Jannes and Jambres are equal to the occasion. They seem to manufacture frogs with perfect ease, although they have no power to remove them. Thus three times was the testimony of Moses lessened, if not neutralized, by men without God doing apparent y just what he did with his God. He had to contend with "the form without the power." So is it now. It is difficult to say what a Jannes or a Jambres cannot do. Can a true child of God, one who has "the power" within him, preach? So can the man who only has the form. O sire, it is a sad truth to tell, but if every Jannes and Jambres were turned out of the pulpit this morning there would be a good many congregations without any preacher, and a good thing for them too. Preach! aye that they can; sentences as smooth and rounded as beach pebbles, and with as much life, roll over their lips. Preach! yes, in studied language and flowing measure that makes many a poor stammering Moses envy their ability. Preach, yes, with plenty of "form" and almost perfect delivery, whilst a congregation that knows and cares nothing about the "power" applauds the eloquence. Being a preacher is not an infallible proof of being a saved man. He may be simply a conjurer in the pulpit, resisting the truth he professes to love. Can a true child of God teach in the Sabbath school? Yes, and so can Jannes and Jambres. Shame is it to our schools that so little care is taken to keep them out of the classes. One is almost tempted to think that children's souls are of so little value that they may be experimented on. But the worst of it is that Jannes can look so much like Moses, and "the form" can so well imitate "the power" that it is difficult not to be sometimes deceived. If children had no souls, and if the work of Sunday School teaching was *not* conversion, then the Jannes would often make the best teacher. These magicians are always clever, their profession requires them to be so. Can a true child of God take a tract-district and visit the sick? so can either Jannes or Jambres. They can visit as punctually, arrange their districts as methodically, and perhaps draw up a far better report of their work. They can pour into the ear of the sick man all the well-worn bedside platitudes, and to the eye of the public, if not to the eye of God, they do as much good as the Moses who is slow of speech, and only has "the power," and do it in a neater style and in better "form." Time would fail to tell of all the different things they can do and are doing. They can figure on the subscription lists of charitable objects, and who is to tell by the look of the figures that the guinea only represents "form" whilst the shilling tells of "power" that made the donor give out of his poverty. They can take the chair at public meetings, and express their unbounded interest in the object that has convened the gathering, with a quiet self-complacency that makes the meek Moses in the body of the hall who is *really* devoted to the work feel humbled to think how far he falls below their standard. They can occupy the honorable position of deacons in our churches—they can carry the bread and wine round at the Lord's Supper—they can engage in prayer—in fact they can do almost anything—not quite—that the man can do who is commissioned of God. I know dear friends of no sadder fact than the possibility of a man looking so like a Christian, and doing so much of a Christian's work, and yet being no Christian

at all; even worse than that, being a resister of the truth, having a name to live and being dead, and spreading death on every hand. In a word being a Jannes or a Jambres, having all "the form" and lacking all "the power." But not only can they do the same things, but *they can speak the same language.* Besides the form of action, they have the form of speech. I often regret that as Christians we have so many set phrases of speech. I believe it is a help to hypocrites and an assistance to all mere formalists. Why is it that in so many instances the moment a man becomes a Christian he ceases to speak in a clear outspoken way, and talks in a jargon of set phrases. It would be a difficult thing for Jannes and Jambres to remain undetected if they had to coin their own language to express their feelings. Unfortunately there is a language already coined for them, and like parrots they repeat what they have heard others say, without understanding the meaning one iota. Religious talk is one of the worst kind of tests that can be employed, for it is no uncommon thing for the emptiest vessel to make the most sound. Many and many a man who like Moses has "the power," like Moses also lacks a ready utterance, and has with him to say, "I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue." There are many like the Scotch girl who when perplexed with a number of theological questions replied "I cannot speak for Him, but I could die for Him." But a Jannes or Jambres never finds any difficulty in giving an experience. If he has not one of his own, he can soon make one, and what is more marvellous still, can often persuade himself that what he is saying does actually express his own feelings. He has repeated experiences that he has *heard* until at last he has fallen into the delusion that he is repeating what he has *felt.* I beseech you, dear friends, do not settle down and conclude you must be all that is right because you have a rich religious vocabulary at your command. Having it does not prove you are *not* a genuine Christian, far from it; it is a good thing to be able to express easily the feelings and the desires of the heart, but at the same time it does not prove that you *are.* You may, with all your flowing speech and wordy piety, be but a Jannes or a Jambres. A good imitation but nothing more—polished electro-plate but not silver.

Thus I have tried to show how close a resemblance may exist between the real and the false, the actual and the apparent. Now what was the difference between Moses and Jannes? The answer is soon given. What he did, he did by a power not his own. What they did, they did by themselves. God was in Moses and did the miracles *through* him. Satan was in them and prompted them to make a copy of Jehovah's works. In the one case there was actual power—and that a divine power—performing actual wonders. In the other case there was simply an empty form *doing* nothing but *looking* much. One was a manifestation of God's might. The other was an exhibition of man's cleverness. There was all the difference between them., that there is between the flower budding and blooming and the wax-work imitation devoid of scent or life; or to use another illustration, between the statue and the man it represents. Doubtless most of you have at some time or another gone through an art gallery. There perhaps you have seen carved in marble a Samson or a Hercules. The figure has been huge, and every part of it intended to display gigantic strength. The shoulders have been massive. The sinews of the arms have

looked like cords, and knotted muscles have stood out in every part. "What power!!!" you exclaimed. No there is not. There is a grand imitation of it. Nothing more. The sinews are all of stone, and the muscles cannot close one finger of the hand. Do you see that little child whose head does not so much as come up to the top of the pedestal on which the giant stands, and looks with awe at the great stony monster towering far above him. There is more power in the little finger of that child than in the whole bulky mass he looks upon. He has life. The statue has not. There is the difference. One has great "form," the other has true power. Jannes and Jambres are statues of Christians. Nothing more.

II. LET US NOTICE THE INFLUENCE OF JANNES AND JAMBRES. Their influence was great; Moses felt its power, and the king and court grew hardened by it. So is it with these of whom they are the type. Jannes and Jambres wield an immense power in the present day, and its no use shutting our eyes to the fact. It is a mark of greatest folly to despise the strength of an adversary, and the surest way to feel it by experience. Jannes is not to be got rid of with a laugh, nor Jambres with a smile of indifference. Their existence is a source of constant danger, and their presence in the professing church does more to paralyze its testimony than all the outward opposition and persecution it has ever met. When we remember also that the Holy Ghost declares that "perilous times" will come with them, it is not for us to shut our eyes and live in a "fool's paradise," particularly so when the perilous times are to come "in the last days"—the days in which we are living. This form of Satanic resistance is an awful proof of the deep-sightedness of the great adversary. He knows that nothing can possibly deaden the power of the church's testimony more than flooding it with a number of cold and heartless formalists, who in the eyes of the world can do as much, and do that much as well as the genuine Christian. And then when the world detects they are but shams and finds that it has been deceived, so much the better for *him*, for he knows that the whole church will be judged by the impostors, and all put down as belonging to the same family. *Counterfeits destroy confidence.* This is true in everything. It is unprincipled rogues that make it so hard for honest men to get their bread. It is quackery that keeps the true medicine out of the field. It is bubble joint-stock companies that eat out all commercial trust, and make the very name to many a synonyme for fraud. Everywhere the true and real are suffering through the influence of the false and base imitations. I have heard an anecdote somewhere that so exactly sets forth the idea I have in my mind I cannot but tell it. One gentleman made a wager with another that if he stood on London Bridge with a tray full of sovereigns and offered them to the public for sixpence each, he would not sell half-a-dozen of them in the day. All day long the man cried out "real sovereigns for sixpence," and declared with all earnestness that he could guarantee their genuineness. Of course no one believed him and he sold none. Why? Because the public had so often seen sham sovereigns for sale that it never doubted they were the same. The gilt having come first had destroyed all faith in the gold. Just so in the spiritual world. The existence of Jannes and Jambres eats out all faith in the reality of any Christian life. The world points to them and

refuses to believe they are the exception and not the rule. Is there one worker for the Lord here this morning who has not found out the truth of what I am saying? I believe not. Go where we will and say what we may we find some miserable Jannes has gone before us, and like a canker worm has eaten out all confidence in our word. Their influence resists the truth. This is what we have to contend with now, and yet how strangely many seem blinded to the fact. Roman Catholicism—infidelity—philosophical atheism—all these are looked upon as deadly sins and preached against continually, but it seems as if the evil growing up in our own midst is hardly perceived. Yet what is the state of the church at large? Is there not a worldly, formal-spirit, percolating through and through it? Are not the doors of the church thrown so wide open that almost any one can become a member? Is there not more of a christian-world, than a church which though in the world is not of the world? Is there not a general tendency to sneer at all decided testimony for Christ, and call it fanatical or puritanical? Instead of the church "going without the camp" bearing Christ's reproach, is there not a very general bringing the camp into the church. I fear so, far more than many like to believe. Jannes and Jambres are creeping into our pulpits, gliding into our churches, and the "form" without the power is rapidly becoming the fashionable thing.

III. LET US NOW IN THE LAST PLACE NOTICE THE END OF THEIR RESISTANCE. They were put to shame. Their pretensions were proved to be ridiculous, and they had to pass condemnation on themselves. Out of their own mouths came the confession of their imposture, and from their own lips was wrung out the acknowledgment that God was with Moses. Three times had they matched his miracles but the fourth time they miserably failed. Observe also how humiliating the subject of their defeat. You will find it in the eighth chapter of Exodus, the eighteenth verse, "and the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, and they could not. Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, "this is the finger of God." Ah Jannes, it must have been a bitter moment when you stood convicted before all of being an impostor! Ah Jambres, how crestfallen art thou now! *Thou* compelled to bear testimony for God against thy will. *Thou* obliged to confess that "power" has won the day against mere "form." O what a contrast between their looks now, and when first they stepped forth to resist God's servant! How complete the collapse of their pretensions. So shall it be with their followers of to-day. This Paul most distinctly states in the verse following our text, "but they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men as theirs also was." "Folly?" Yes, folly. No other word could better describe their resistance. The hypocrite or lifeless formalist is of all fools the greatest. He is almost certain to be unmasked in time, and even should he carry on the horrible deception unto the last, what shall it profit him when God calleth for his soul?

Now just as Jannes and Jambres failed to do *all* that Moses did, so there are some things that the mere formalist can never accomplish. Let him but try, and he will break down, and have to acknowledge it requires the power of God. I will but mention two. *He has no power to bear trouble with joyfulness.* His whole life being one of externals when he is driven by force of circumstances to seek his joy in

the life within, he fails, and fails utterly, for there is no life there. A sham christianity withers up in days of trouble. *It* has no power to give a light in the eye, and place a smile on the lip when every outward comfort is fleeing fast. *It* has no arms to put beneath a man when the dark waters of sorrow roll and surge around him. *It* has no power to make the tongue of the bereaved one sing, or give calm serenity to the sick and pain-racked sufferer. No, it can do none of these. It fails like the magicians when needed the most. The "form" may do for bright and sunny days when sorrow and sickness are unknown, but it requires the "power" to triumph in the winter night, and to "take joyfully the spoiling of the goods." Put a Jannes or Jambres amidst *a number of anxious souls*, and tell him to speak to them and point them the way of peace. See how he fails. I think I hear him say "I could preach, but *this* is more than I can do, and they ask me questions about things I cannot understand. Their very anxiety is a mystery to me. It is not my forte to speak with souls." No, Sir, it is not. Anything that requires spiritual knowledge, or is beyond the boundary line of "form" is not your work. The finger of God is wanted here, not your sleight of hand. Beloved hearers, let me urge this question home upon you, "could you speak to an anxious soul?" Do you know anything of what being saved means, and therefore know how to show the way to others? Has there ever been anything more than mere superficial work or heartless form in your professed religion? If not, I pray you to remember that Jannes and Jambres *were included in the doom of the Egyptians*. When the angel of death walked through the streets of Egypt, there was no exception made. There was not one house without its dead, and for aught I know they were involved in the last awful judgment at the Red Sea. The form of religion does not save—the appearance of piety is of no avail. The hell of the drunkard and licentious will be the hell of the loud sounding professor who has the form devoid of the power. Now let no timid soul be affrighted and troubled by what I have said. Thank God, there are multitudes whose hearts beat true for Him, and who in a shallow, cold, and heartless age, are yet living a life of "power" and testimony. The Lord increase their number ten-thousand-fold. Remember the false does but prove the existence of the true. The sham declares there is such a thing as the genuine. The imitation gives unconscious homage to what it imitates. It is the multitude of the true that makes it possible for the false to pass current. Do you love Jesus, dear friend? Does His name stir up all the emotions of your heart? Is it your joy to be in fellowship with Him? If you can say "yes" to these questions you need not fear. No Jannes or Jambres could.

Let us now separate with solemn heartsearching as to whether we are among those who have the "power," or among those who only possess the "form." God make Jannes and Jambres a warning to us all.

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GOD'S POOL AND MAN'S PORCHES.

A Sermon,

PREACHED AT THE EAST LONDON TABERNACLE,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 18th, 1872,

BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

ON BEHALF OF THE LONDON HOSPITAL.

"Now, there was at Jerusalem by the sheep-market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. JOHN v.—2.

I am sure you will readily believe me when I say that my presence here this evening is the result of a strong, and I might also add, painful effort. There have been many things during the past few days calculated to make me shrink from the work of preaching to-night. When the heart receives a heavy blow there is a natural tendency to shun the public gaze, and a strong desire to court quietude. In addition to this heart-reason, there has also been a mental difficulty, for I have found it no easy matter to gather my thoughts together in any small measure, or centre them for any length of time upon any one topic. No matter what text I selected, the moment I sought to concentrate my mind upon it, I found my thoughts flying off at a tangent, into a home that is darkened, to a mother who is widowed, and to a family that has been bereaved of its father. To break the fetters and get free to think of anything save the anxious watchings and heavier bereavement of the past week has taxed all our powers; besides which (it may be a sign of weakness, but we confess it) there has been a thought something like this crossing our mind—"There certainly will be found some to say, 'If Mr. Brown felt the death of his father very much he would not be able to preach;" and we all know that there is such an inclination to give way to that tyrant called "the proper thing," and sacrifice our conscience to its claims, that there was even on this account a strong temptation to leave to other lips the joy of pleading for the sick, lest for a moment our love to the departed should be called in question, and our filial affection doubted. But that which has decided me at all hazards to attempt the work is the special object calling us together this evening. I thought I heard a voice saying "don't be selfish in your sorrow, and God forbid because you have been bereaved, the sick and the sorrowing and the poor should lose your advocacy;" and sure I am that if those lips which have so often spoken in this place—if those lips now sealed in death were but able to speak—they would be the first to cry "let not the hospital suffer because of my departure, but rather let the fact of my having been cut down serve as an extra argument when you plead on the behalf of those who are following me through the valley, not merely having the

pain of sickness but the additional sorrow of poverty and privation." Under these circumstances I throw myself upon your generous sympathy, and if my thoughts seem to run every one away from his fellow rather than together, and if there is a want of consecutiveness and order in the sermon, excuse it, and believe that the difficulty has not been to preach well but to preach at all.

This verse you will see states that by the sheep-market, or as it might more properly be rendered, sheep-gate of Jerusalem, there was a pool called Bethesda, signifying "the house of mercy," and that at certain seasons of the year an angel came down and troubled the waters. Whoever then first stepped in after the troubling of the water was made whole, no matter what the disease might be under which he was suffering, or how long the period he had been so afflicted. We are not this evening going to enter into the vexed question about the angel troubling the water—whether it was mythical or whether it was real—whether it merely symbolizes the medicinal and healing powers of the water, or whether there actually came down an angel that could be seen by the sufferers surrounding the pool. I need hardly say, for myself I prefer the latter interpretation. John states it *was* an angel, and I see no reason why we should accept anybody's supposition as preferable to his direct statement. If the angel merely represents medicinal power I see not how that clears away the difficulty, as it was only *the first* one that stepped in that was made whole. To believe in a momentary medicinal virtue capable of healing *any and every* sickness, requires, to our mind, greater faith than to believe it was purely miraculous. We hold therefore that at certain times a direct power came from heaven, making that porch-surrounded pool a veritable "house of mercy." All the healing work of the pool was God's work, and His alone; but in our text we have man's work side by side with God's. There were five porches. In all probability these porches were built by some charitable people in the city of Jerusalem, who had argued something after this sort—"We have no power to heal the sick, but we can at all events build a shelter for them when they come seeking a cure. It is not in us to move the water into an all-healing pool, but we can build a place so near the water that when the sufferers come after many a weary mile, they will be able to rest there, secured from the sun, and sheltered from the tempest, and wait in comfort until the angel of mercy stirs it with his wing." Thus I think you will see we have in our text the union of God's work and human agency. God digs the pool and man builds the porches. Our subject then to-night is God's pool and man's porches, or the union of Divine mercy and human charity.

First of all *we shall look at Bethesda as an illustration of God's work and man's agency in the healing of sick souls*, and then afterwards we shall look upon it as beautifully illustrating *how God and man can and do work together for the alleviation and cure of bodily suffering.*

First—LET US LOOK AT BETHESDA WITH ITS PORCHES AS ILLUSTRATING SPIRITUAL WORK. It is a high honor, beloved, to be a co-worker with God, no matter in how humble a capacity. To have anything at all to do with Jehovah's work is an honor compared with which all the honors of this world are paltry and worthless. No star or medal the world ever put upon the breast of any man is so high an honor as that which he has who in some humble way works hand in

hand with God. The Creator and the creature, the Father and the adopted child, the Redeemer and the redeemed, both engaged together in some work, the result of which is the triumph of mercy and compassion; this is a peerless dignity indeed, an incomparable honor. But lest, dear friends, you and I should get too much exalted in mind at the idea of being fellow-laborers with God, let us call to mind a truth well calculated to keep pride at a distance, or put it in the dust if present. God can do without us. The pool could do without the porches, and do as well without them. It had none of its healing qualities from them. No poor sufferer was ever eased of his pain because of the influence of the porches upon the pool. It was the pool alone that did the work and had all the glory of the cure. Had some ruthless hand laid all the porches low, and left nothing but ruins in their place, the pool would have been as powerful to heal as if they had never existed. So let us remember, in order that we may be kept free from any pride of soul that God may use us, but if we were dead to-morrow God could do as well without us. The pool can do without the porch, but the porch is a worthless thing without the pool; and therefore, child of God, if thou hast had the high honor put on thee of doing anything for thy God, thou must cast the glory at his feet, and say, "Lord, Thou hast used me, but I know Thou couldst have used anybody else. Thou hast blest me, but Thou couldst have blest anyone else as much. Thou hast employed instrumentality, but Thou couldst have done away with it all. Thou hast honored the porch, but all the healing has come from the pool. From first to last all is of Thee. Thou art the Alpha and Thou art the Omega."

But remember on the other hand, that God so ordered it that the porches should be built by man. Although not dependent on human agency, it yet seems to be God's *modus operandi* never to do for man what man can do for himself. Man could not make a pool of Bethesda, so God made it for him. But man could build five porches; so God left man to do it. You will find throughout scripture history that our God acts ever after this plan. He warns Noah of a coming deluge, gives him all directions as to how to build the ark, and by a miracle constrains two of every kind to enter the ark when built. Man could not do that. He leaves it however to man to drive all the nails and shape the timber. That was something that man could do. So right through the history of all his saints. Take for example Israel in the wilderness. To cause bread to fall from heaven was beyond the power of any. God does that; but when the bread had fallen, they could go outside their tent doors and gather it, and therefore the Lord did not rain the bread into their mouths, but on the ground; and if they would not take the trouble to go and fetch what God had given them they might starve, and serve them right. "That Thou givest they gather," is not only true of the beasts of the forest, but of the children of His love. The gathering makes them prize the gift the more. God digging the pool does not exonerate man from building the porches.

Let us for a moment look and see how this may be applied in many ways. This blessed book is all of Him. No human hand dug its deep well of truth. From Genesis to Revelations it makes one glorious Bethesda. It is a house of mercy, and in its chapters and verses there is latent healing power, that needs but the moving of the Spirit to heal any. To write this book, and make it a power of healing

unto souls is God's work, and His work alone. But you and I can place this book into the hands of different people, and that is our work. God writes the book, but it is for us to print it, and scatter it on every hand. He makes this pool of Bethesda; but you and I, perhaps through the agency of a Bible Society, have to help build the five porches. "Faith cometh by hearing," and God's most frequent method of salvation is, to save men through the preaching of His cross in His sanctuaries. Now that is God's work. Man can neither give himself nor anyone else faith; but man can build the sanctuaries for the gospel to be preached in. Therefore God does not build any chapels by miracles. If men want to have houses to worship in, God says, "that is your work: you must toil, and you must collect, and you must give, and you must pay for it. You can build the brick porch, but it is for Me to make it a Bethesda, a house of mercy unto thousands." No one has power to give peace to an anxious soul, or touch and heal the heart that has been wounded. There is no earthly house of mercy—no man-devised Bethesda—that we possess that can give rest to the sin-convinced and self-condemned soul. This is God's work. But we can throw open an enquirer's class as a porch to help the sinner to the house of mercy, and therefore we say that no church is truly complete unless it has the porch of an enquirer's class to shelter the trembling penitents and point them to the pool. To restore a backslider is as much God's work as to convert a sinner. No power have we to bring back again the soul that has wandered, but we can build a porch to encourage his return—we can look after him in his wanderings—take him by the hand, and speak the kindly word of warning and entreaty. Thus you see, God and His saints work together in happy union. God doing all that man cannot possibly do, and at the same time leaving to him all that can be easily accomplished by human means. God, in other words, looks after the pool, and says to His saints, "now you look after the porches."

It has occurred to me that in many ways Bethesda makes a very beautiful illustration of what a sanctuary ought to be. I will briefly notice one or two points.

The first thing we observe is—*that those porches were only built for the sake of the pool.* You cannot imagine any gentleman in Jerusalem having built them merely for the sake of an architectural display. Most certainly they were not built for lounges and as equally certain is it they were not built for people to sleep in. They were simply built to help men to get to the water that could heal them. Every sanctuary that is built aright is built from the same motive. It is built simply to lead men unto Christ. I fear that it is not a very uncharitable thing to say that if we were to go deeply into the history of many sanctuaries, we should find that a multitude of motives very different to this helped in their erection. Too often they are built without a thought of their becoming houses of mercy. Many of them have for their foundation stones a previous split in some other place of worship, whilst many of them have arisen more through the pride of some great man, or the bickering of some ill-tempered man, than anything else.

But observe, secondly, that *the porches were only of value as they led to the pool.* Yonder is a man who has been for years a paralytic, he has heard about the marvellous power of this water, and says, "I will, go and try it." Suppose that when he gets as far as the porch he sits

down and says, "Well, I have got now just where I desire," and were to begin to look round the porch and say, "What a comfortable place this is! How kind of those gentlemen in Jerusalem ever to have built it;" suppose he were to wait month after month, and year after year in that porch. I ask you how much the better would he be for it? That porch might just as well be his sepulchre. It has no power to heal him. The man is as diseased as ever, and as far as he is concerned that porch is simply worthless. In other words the porch was no good to any man *except he went beyond it.*

Do you observe too that those who filled the porches were just the very ones we want to see filling our sanctuaries? You find the congregation described in the third verse, "now in these porches lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the waters." Here we have the kind of gathering we want to see filling all the porches of the land. First of all, there were *sick ones.* Here is a poor paralysed man, and there an impotent one. Yonder is one shaking all over with the ague, and there is another fearing instant death through heart disease. All kinds of disease are represented. Oh, would that all the sanctuaries of England were full of sick souls! all kinds, no matter how bad, and the worse the more welcome. Let us see to it, dear friends, that we never seek to be such a very highly respectable congregation, that the presence of any great sinners would shock our sensibilities. The Lord bring in here the most pronounced sinners of East London, and make this Tabernacle a great porch for desperately bad cases. Whoever else is shut out, room must be made for them. A sanctuary unfrequented by "the bad ones" of the neigbourhood is of little service to God and small annoyance to the devil.

They were not only sick ones in those porches. They were something better. They were those *who knew themselves to be sick.* They came there with a special purpose, and that purpose was to be healed. That preacher has delightful work who preaches to a congregation drawn by the same desire. That sermon shall most assuredly bear fruit that is preached unto a company of sinners who feel their sinnership and have come in the hope of obtaining mercy. Friend, let me ask you, have you come here to-night in the hope of being healed. As you wended your way along the road, did you feel like one of those men going to the porch saying "Oh would that God might just trouble the water to-night! Oh that there might be a power from heaven which should give unto the sermon some magic influence with this heart of mine!" Oh my brother, we hold out the hand and greet you. Right glad are we to see you here. This porch was built for just such souls as you, and before long if not to-night you shall find Bethseda through it.

And then you observe that *that they were poor people* that were there, people that could not any way afford to have a doctor. The beggars and the riff-raff of Jerusalem were there—men that had not a penny to give to any one to help them into the water when it was troubled. If you had asked one of the Pharisees that Christ speaks about in the sixth of Matthew, to walk into the porch; in all probability he would have gathered round about him the long flowing garments of his respectability lest they should touch such creatures, and hold his breath as he walked lest he should get contaminated by coming amongst

such a wretched rabble crew. I would that we could see more of the poor and penniless helping to fill our sanctuaries. Members of the church I beseech you to listen to this word. Whoever else may be overlooked or unnoticed, mind a poor person is not, and whoever else may be left to stand during the service, let it not be such an one. Rather let it be yourself. And whenever you see a man who has unmistakeable marks of more than ordinary poverty about him, let him be the one who has the first grasp of your hand; for we want this porch to be filled, like Bethseda, not merely with the sick, but with the sick poor.

And observe, lastly here, that there *were plenty of them*. It is said "In these lay a great multitude." There is nothing easier than to sneer at numbers when they come to hear the preaching of the word, though I never hear them despised when the meeting is of a political or secular nature—and I willingly grant that numbers of themselves, are not worth much; but at the same time let it be remembered that if there are no fish in the pond you cannot catch any, and if there is only a handful of people in a chapel, hundreds cannot be saved there. The Holy Ghost cannot turn a pew-back into a saint, but if there be half-a-dozen sinners in the pew, He can change them into six saints, who shall sing eternal praises to their God; and therefore it is mere false humility to say one does not rejoice when multitudes flock to hear. May God make every porch in this great east end of London too straight for the throngs of the poor and the sick and the spiritually diseased that shall crowd into them.

We close this point then by observing that wherever we find God placing a pool we are to build a porch, and where we see Him at work we are to seek to have a hand in that work—to be fellow-laborer with Him. Where the Lord in his mercy digs a Bethesda, let us as a church add the five porches.

And now, lastly, I desire to use this text as illustrating THE WORK WE MAY DO IN CONJUNCTION WITH GOD FOR THE ALLEVIATION AND HEALING OF BODILY SICKNESS. Alas, that group at Bethesda is but a very small sample of a great multitude—a multitude seeking health. Did you and I but realize how many there are to-night seeking that same thing, I do not think there would be a dry eye in this assembly. Go to some of our southern sea-side places, and look at the poor wan, wasted frames that meet you at every turn. Do you see them trying to drink in health with the breeze as they are being drawn up and down the parade? With many you know it is a hopeless case. Death has put his stamp upon them, the tree is marked for the axe. Yet they rightly say "While there is breath there is hope." And so all the expedients wealth can command are tried. But oh sirs, you and I need not travel far from where we are to find Bethesda's congregation; go but into the courts and alleys of this East End, and behold what a multitude of poor haggard pale ones, their hands so thin that you can almost see through them, and what is worst of all the livelihood of the family depending upon them. Whilst you and I are worshipping here, remember that within ten minutes' walk of this sanctuary, in any direction, there are poor dying wretches gasping out their last with hardly a comfort round about them. What is to be done? Can we give them health? No! that is God's work. We have no more power to make the heart beat regularly and those pulses

bound again with health than the men at Jerusalem had power to make that water of Bethesda's pool mighty to heal. If we cannot heal them, what can we do? We can build five porches. God uses means, and chief amongst means are medicines and the care and attention of physicians, doctors and nurses, True, but how are the poor to get these? I know not how except some of the men of London build porches wherein the poor and the sick may find help towards the means that with God's blessing can make them whole. Mark you the means are nothing of themselves. The water was nothing until the angel touched it, The medicine is nothing until God blesses it. The physician of himself is powerless, let him be never so clever in his profession. The speaker had a painful proof only last week that with all the skill in the world that can be commanded, when death comes it cannot be averted. What is it then that is needed? It is the blessing of the angel of the covenant resting on the means that are used—it is God commanding health through their instrumentality. But you and I may say "Brother, we cannot make you whole, we wish we could, but there is a Bethesda which, by the Lord's blessing may, and we can build a porch to help you get and stay there. We know you are poor and cannot afford to have a long doctor's bill come in, and your poverty only deepens our sympathy, so we will build you a porch which shall be free of all expense. We will build you a place where you can obtain just the care, and just the nursing, and just the medicine that you need, without it costing you a penny. We will put up a porch of mercy over your head, if we cannot give efficacy to the waters of Bethesda." It is to help in such a work of mercy we appeal to you to-night. Within little more than a mile of this place there is a hospital—a Bethesda—that is powerful for good when the angel from heaven blesses the means that are used; and we want just for five minutes to plead with you to do your best to help keep this porch in repair. We will try and enlist your sympathies by telling you something of its history The London Hospital has stood for one hundred and thirty-one years; during this time there have been changes in the government, and changes in the neighbourhood, but no change in the spectacle that different generations have beheld outside this hospital. For one hundred and thirty-one years a constant stream of sufferers has passed through those iron gates, only increasing in volume as the century has rolled on. It was built from right motives. If any of you would like to know what led to the building of that porch, we can give you the cause in royal language. George the Second states that "several of our faithful subjects deeply affected with the distresses of their fellow creatures, and desirous, as much as in them lay, to relieve some at least from perishing for want of proper care during such their visitation, did, on the 3rd November, 1740, form themselves into a society now called the London Hospital." Thus that noble building rose because there were some hearts that felt it was a dreadful thing to be sick and to be poor too. Surely we can assert that the porch was not only built from right motives, but was built in the very best place that it could be; surrounded as it is by a dense population on every side, and a population mainly composed of the poor and working classes. I would also especially call your attention to the fact that in a great measure this hospital is *a free one.*

I quote from last year's statistics—"Recommended by life

governors 1,155; admitted free 3,626, out of which number 2,021 were smitten down by sudden accident." I think that when a hospital throws its gates wide open like this, and says to an enormous neighbourhood "Bring your disabled here—bring your sick and your dying to our beds—carry in here the man that has fallen from the scaffold, and we will take him in without asking a question or wanting a recommendation—bring here the man that has fallen down in the street, and let him be never so poor, he shall have the best attention that it is possible to give"—such a hospital has a claim upon our sympathy that cannot be ignored or refused. There is one statement which I leave to speak for itself. How many people do you think have been relieved by the London Hospital? As I sat in my father's garden this afternoon, looking at the number, it seemed to me to grow and grow and grow as I meditated on it, until I saw in it such an aggregate of sickness and suffering that it appalled me. *The number relieved by the London Hospital since its erection* is 1,682,886. Nearly two-thirds of the population of Scotland have passed through those gates. "Has it been," you say, "a house of mercy? Has this porch led to Bethesda's pool?" We again give you simply the statistics of last year. Out of 4,781 that entered, 1,708 were dismissed quite cured. 2,198 relieved, and only 534 out of well-nigh 5,000 died there. There are tens of thousands who can say concerning that building "If it is not Bethesda itself it has been to me one of its porches." Certainly there are many of our own members who are living testimonies to its benefits. I will now venture to put the case most plainly to you. As a church and congregation, we have so grown that there are constantly sick ones in our midst, and we feel it no dishonor to say that the majority of our sick ones are poor. Some few years ago you will remember we made a collection of thirty guineas, and that constituted me a life governor. From that time down to the present I have never been without the full number at the hospital, and if I were to say that I have one-hundred applications a year for letters, I do not think I should be exceeding the truth. I have therefore thought that if by any means possible we should raise this day the sum of sixty guineas by which we could make two of our deacons life governors. I hope and believe you will do it. Should there be only sufficient to obtain one life governorship, our dear brother, Mr. WICKERS will be made such, but should your liberality so abound as to raise the amount I ask, then our dear brother, Mr. MACE will be fellow-governor. Friends, I now leave the matter with you, stating two facts, asking one question, and breathing one prayer. There are thousands of sick to whom a doctor's bill means ruin. You cannot heal them, it is God that must make the Bethesda pool efficacious. Will you help to build the five porches? The Lord give you liberal hearts for Jesus' sake.—AMEN.

The Collections amounted to £63 : 3s. : 6d.

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN will most thankfully receive, acknowledge and send on to the Hospital any Donations that may be sent to him by any of the readers of this Sermon. Address to "East London Tabernacle, Burdett Road, E.

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East London Tabernacle Pulpit.

IN MEMORY OF MY FATHER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 25TH, 1872, BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

AT THE EAST LONDON TABERNACLE.

"Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better."—PHILIPPIANS i—23.

How marvellous is the transforming power of the religion of the Lord Jesus! Whatever it touches it beautifies, and all that comes within its range receives a lustre and a loveliness the reflection of itself. Everything on which its light is cast appears the very reverse of what it appeared before. Where there was darkness, light springs into existence, where there was previous gloom, brightness shines, and where there was sadness, songs begin to abound. How true is this in reference to the heart. Behold yonder heart in its natural state. Can you imagine anything more devoid of aught that is lovely? Can you think of anything more dreary to the view? 'Tis a wilderness, a wilderness o'ergrown with briars and with thorns, whilst these are interlaced with poisonous plants, and in and out amongst them there creep reptile lusts and serpent sins. It is enough to make an angel weep to look on such a sight. But lo! God's hour of mercy chimes for that heart. Grace touches it. See now the contrast. Instead of the thorn there is the fir tree; and instead of the briar the myrtle tree sends forth its sweet perfume, whilst the birds of praise carol as they rest in the branches of the trees of the Lord's right-hand planting, and the serpents are either destroyed or else hide themselves in their holes. The religion of Jesus has touched that heart, and at its touch there has been a magic transformation, and where dreariness and death reigned, there is now beauty, delight and joy. What it does for the heart it does also for the life. Previously the life of that man had been a wasted, frittered, foolish life, baneful, perhaps, to all who came within the range of its influence. But now how different. There is not a greater change in the heart than there is in the life, and the man who previously had lived to himself begins to say, "For me to live is Christ." The very countenance seems to have caught additional beauty. Previously, those compressed lips spoke of selfishness, but now there is something in the very eye that says the man is living for others rather than himself. Before it was easy to see how an evil temper knit those brows, but now as we look on him we can see that he is long-suffering and not easily provoked. The lion is turned into the lamb, and the vulture transformed into the dove. The outward life is as

marvellously changed as the heart within the breast. Then what it does for the heart and for the life, it does for all the surroundings of the man. Everything he looks upon appears different. For example, take the sorrows and troubles of life. Before he had Christ it was darkness without alleviation; but now if the religion of Jesus does not free him from sorrow, it alters its aspect. If it does not take away the black pall, it puts a fringe of gold upon it. If it does not altogether take away the storm cloud, it yet throws a light behind it that shines through the rifts, or else paints a rainbow on its black brow, and the man exclaims with astonishment, "Why, everything is altered. The very things I wept over before I can rejoice over now. How is it?" The answer is simple, "It is the blessed religion of Jesus that has thus changed everything."

And then going a step further on, we add, it alters death likewise. When a man has Christ in the heart, death becomes as much transformed as everything else. It is no longer to him a dreadful thing, a dark thought, only associated with corruption and the tomb. Death now appears to him to be more like an angel than aught besides. Death to the Christian is not death, but simply God kissing his child to sleep. There is the last sigh drawn; one gentle breath; and in the arms of eternal mercy the child has fallen asleep, and death from being the greatest foe has been transformed into the choicest friend.

This is what the religion of our Saviour accomplishes. You will observe that in our text Paul gives a very beautiful description of death "I have a desire"—not to be annihilated, not to cease to live, not even to die. "I have a desire *to depart*"—to depart. The idea of continued existence is in that word. He who departs has not ceased to be. He who leaves one spot to go to another still lives. Meditating on these words it seemed to me that perhaps Paul's idea might be very well illustrated by a sight that doubtless many of you have often seen. There is an emigrant ship lying in the docks yonder, and it is about time for her to start on her voyage. The relatives are assembled on the quay, watching the departure. Many are the tears rolling down the cheeks of those standing on the quay, but I do not see, after all, so many tears on the faces of those on board. They believe that they are going to a far better land, and they go brightened with hope. By-and-bye there comes the last shake of the hand; and now the narrow plank between the quay and the ship is removed, and the vessel begins to glide out of the dock into the river. I think I can hear the last goodbye as it comes from the ship to those on the shore, and I think, too, I can see the mother as she waves her handkerchief to her boy leaning over the bulwarks. The ship goes quietly down the river; you see her, yet more and more indistinctly. Now you can scarcely see her at all, and at last that bend in the river shuts her out from sight. Well, the emigrants have departed, but they are there all right; and so says Paul, "I have a desire to depart. I am willing to have my cable slipped; I am willing to start upon the voyage to cross yon narrow sea." Why? "That I may be with Christ." Oh Paul, this explains thy longing. I had marvelled hitherto why thou shouldst have

any desire to depart or die, but these two magic words explain it all—"*with Christ.*" Only two words, but heaven condensed in them. "With Christ." But two syllables, yet such a concentration of bliss in them that heaven itself will never unfold the depth. "With Christ."

Let us take these two words and specially dwell on them, looking at them in three ways; first as *expressive of the believer's desire through life*, secondly as *the believer's song in death*, and thirdly as *the believer's experience throughout eternity*. And then we shall close by observing them as the dying words of our own dear father.

I—Let us then, first of all look at them as EXPRESSING THE BELIEVER'S DESIRE THROUGH LIFE. Paul desired to be with Christ, and every believer hath this same goal before his mind's eye. The arrows of his desires are flying towards the same target. He remembers well the time when he was *without* Christ. He also looks back and remembers that anxious period when he was first awoke to the consciousness of the awfulness of his position. Well doth he bear in mind those days and nights of agony and fear; they are indelibly printed upon his memory. Then he calls to mind that moment when by faith he rested on Jesus, and when he could say "Christ is mine," so he saith. "I have known what it is to be *without* Christ; I have known what it is to live *on* Christ, and now I long for the closing experience of being *with* Christ. I have had the darkness of being without him—I have had the break of day, the grey morning light of living on him; and now I want the noontide glory of being with Him. I have known what it is to have the burning thirst, I have known what it is to drink of the stream; but my spirit longs to drink at the fountain head. I have known what it is to have the wail of sorrow in my heart, I have known what it is to have the first notes of praise struck in my soul; but I want to join in the full anthem of heaven's praise. Without Christ—I have been that. Living on him—I am that. But oh! to be with Him—with Him! This yet remains, and 'tis after this my spirit pines."

Now this longing to be with Christ is very easily explained. The saint being born from above naturally desires to go above. All things tend towards the place of their original. The sparks having first of all in ages back come from the sun, leap upwards towards it the moment they are liberated from the dark prison-house of that lump of coal. The eagle that is born in yon high rocky eyrie is not content to skim the water's edge like the swallow; having an eagle's eye, an eagle's heart and an eagle's wing, she beats her way upward on the storm-blast, and sails at a dizzy height. Water, let it have its own way, will always find its level, it will rise to the elevation from which it came. So grace having come from heaven, struggles to get back again to heaven; and the life which a believer has in his soul being a life which has come direct from Christ, will allow him no rest until it reach the place of its birth. The believer suffers from a *mal-de-pays*, a sickness after his own country. I remember well some few years ago being acquainted with a young Swiss lady who had come over to live in England, after a while every one felt concerned about her health. The bloom had faded off her cheeks, and all thought she was going

into a rapid consumption. She became weaker and weaker, and tried all sorts of expedients to recover health, until at last a friend suggested "I believe, after all, she is only suffering from *mal-de-pays*. Send her back to Switzerland." The very thought had magic power in it, and no sooner was she once more among the valleys of the Alps, breathing the crisp air that came to her fresh across the glaciers, then all signs of consumption fled. Having a Swiss heart beating within her breast, she could not rest until she was back again in Switzerland. So, having a new heart that has come from the heavenly land we suffer from the *mal-de-pays*, and yearn to get up to where our life came from.

A second reason is—*the believer's relationship to Christ.* Think for a moment of the relationship between the saint and his Saviour, and then you will understand how it is that the saint hath a desire to depart and to be with Christ. He is the bridegroom—the church, the bride—the Saviour, the husband—the Church, the wife. Is it a strange thing if the wife longs to be with her husband? Imagine for a moment that a husband leaves his wife, and says, "I am going across the Atlantic, but I shall either come back to you or else I will send word for you to come to me." Do you think that when the letter comes one morning bearing the postmark of the place where she knows him to be, and she reads that she is to go over to him that she will weep many tears about it? Not one. She has a wifely heart, and is therefore willing to cross the Atlantic or ten to be again with her husband. Christ has left us, and he says, "I will either come to you again, or else I will send word for you to come to me across the Atlantic billows of death. I will be waiting on the other side to receive you." Oh, is it a remarkable thing then, if his spouse saith, "I have a desire to depart and to be with him."

And so, Lord Jesus, we are thy bride, and we sigh either for thy coming to us, or thy message to us to come unto thee. This, then—our relationship to Christ—explains the desire of the apostle to depart and be with him.

But thirdly, *all that the believer knows about Christ inflames his desire to be with him.* O, would that we had a better tongue to dwell upon this theme, but let your own memory supply our lack of words. What has Christ been to you? Everything you know of Christ thus far—does it not make you want to be with him, for has not he been all sweetness? Has not his name become all music to your ear? Can you not say that what you know of him only inflames your soul to know him more? Can you not add with truth, "His very thought with rapture fills my soul." The embraces of his love have been such that you long to have a closer embrace still. The fellowship you have had with him has not satiated or satisfied your soul. It has only quickened the appetite, and you cry 'more, more, more!'

We can not omit also to say, that *earth has her arguments* to induce the soul to desire to depart. Whilst there are heavenly drawings there are earthly drivings, and whilst God lifts our spirit upward with a golden chain link by link, there are arguments of earth that make it easy to go. A cold heart that always will be cold until it is baptised

in the light of heaven, a will that is still so rebellious to a Father's will, these things make one long to go and be different. Earth itself with all its disappointments, bereavements, losses, crosses, treachery, faithlessness and slander, makes the soul almost in a hurry to quit here and enter eternity. With the psalmist we sigh, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." Yes, heaven and earth both unite to make the saint exclaim "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ."

Observe, lastly, on this point, that *the desire is confined to being with Christ.* It is not, "I have a desire to depart, and to be in heaven." Oh no! it is far better than that. Nor is it, "I have a desire to depart and to get free of care." No, it is, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ." It seems to me, dear friends, as if it would be almost better not to say another word than simply repeat, "With Christ, with Christ." 'Tis honey in the mouth, and the more often you turn it over the sweeter does it become. Yes! heaven is not merely a place of golden streets and turrets and pinnacles glittering with the carbuncle. No! that is not enough for the believer. It is, "with Christ." All the pearly gates and all the cherubic songs and all the seraphic praises fail to make the heaven of our desire. It is, "with Christ." It is not the glory of the place—it is the beauty of the person.

"With Christ." Oh, how shall I illustrate it? It is the magnet that makes the soul tremble, and will not let it rest until it points true towards it. "With Christ." Oh, that is the light in the window that shines in the distance, and on which the traveller fixes his eye as he journeys through an unknown country. "There's a light in the window for thee, brother;" and the light in that window is this—"I shall be with Christ." "With Christ." Yes; that is the distant haven on which the mariner gazes as the ship rocks and reels, as the timbers creak, and as the storm blast whistles through the rigging. "With Christ." These words are the bugle note that awakens all the heroism in a Christian's soul, and makes him willing to dash into the thickest of the fray. Says he, "I can cut my way through ten thousand foes, for on the other side it is "with Christ."

II. Now, much more briefly, in the second place, LET US LOOK AT THESE TWO WORDS AS FORMING THE BELIEVER'S SONG IN DEATH. We have marked the believer journeying homeward, having an intense desire to reach his goal. Well, he is getting near it now. I think I see him. He is gently breathing out his last in that quiet bedroom. The blinds are down, and sorrowing ones are standing grouped around the bed. The flowers are blooming by thousands in the garden without, and the singing of the birds is plainly heard. Has he got a song? He has. It is that which has been his desire through life. It is "with Christ." That which was at a distance before has now come wonderfully near. The magnet now is no longer at a distance but held right over the head of the dying one, The light in the window is no longer on a distant horizon, but near, so near that the glazing eye can see into the mansion itself. The haven of rest—there is only one billow between

the ship and it. The bugle note—oh, it is sounding now more clearly in his ear than ever—not now to urge him on to battle, but to tell him that the victory is won. It is the bugle of recall.

Ask him, "Brother art thou afraid of death?" his answer is, "No, not an atom." He has put his hand into the shepherd-bag of scripture and taken out two smooth pebbles called "with Christ," he has put these smooth stones into the sling of faith, and the Goliath—Death—with all his terrors has fallen down before them. Death is conquered. "With Christ." Yes! how small all other things appear to him now. He used to be an active business man. Go, whisper in his ear there is a fall in the funds. He will smile and say "with Christ,—this is the fund I have to do with now." Go, tell him there is a panic in the City. "There is no panic in my soul," he answers. Go, tell him there is a run on the bank. He only answers. "I have a heavenly bank that will stand any run on it. I shall be with Christ soon." And how that thought seems to drown all other thoughts, and as the man gets nearer and nearer to the realisation of his desire how the face seems to get something of heaven's glory in it. And so right down to the water's edge that which has been the desire of the life remains the song in the hour and article of death.

III. This brings us to our third point. IT IS THE BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE IN ETERNITY.

You see we have watched his course from the moment when he was without Christ until the moment when he is just dying. He is not yet quite with Christ, but he is very near, and now—there is one breath drawn and that is *the last*.

> "One gentle sigh the fetters breaks,
> We scarce can say 'he's gone,'
> Before the willing spirit takes
> Her mansion near the throne."

Ah, that last breath did it. Brother, thou hadst only a breath betwixt thee and being with Christ, and that breath has been drawn, and thou art with him now. There was but one gentle sigh betwixt thee and Jesus, and that sigh has been heaved; thou wilt sigh no more for ever. Thou art in the arms of thy beloved. Hast thou ever thought, dear friends, what that first moment will be when the spirit says "Now I am in heaven; now I have reached home; now the cares, the troubles, the sorrows of life are all over. Safely housed! Now am I with Christ. In Christ's own house, dwelling in the mansion which infinite love has prepared." Surely, when you and I look round about that mansion we shall be amazed to see the ten thousand proofs of loving forethought. Who knows what he has laid up in store for those that love him? When we get there we shall find that like a kind elder brother, he has been thinking of us for many a year and made everything ready for our reception. There will be no passing through the doors and finding we were not expected, but in a moment we shall be embraced in the arms and welcomed to the home of our Saviour.

"With Christ." Yes, with him to *see him*.

"Jesus! these eyes have never seen
That radiant form of thine;
The veil of sense hangs dark between
Thy lovely face and mine."

But when I am with him I shall see him. Oh, dear friends, have you ever thought what it will be to see him,—to look into that dear countenance that once ran with spittle for you—to look into those eyes of infinite compassion that once wept over guilty Jerusalem,—to look into those dear wounds, and see the mark of the nails in his hands and feet? To see him! Oh, how will the soul gaze upon Christ. How will the ransomed drink in with his eyes his blest Redeemer! With him—to see him. Yes, and with him, *to hear him*. Hear those lips of our adorable Saviour saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father!" Oh, what rapturous joy for Christ to take the soul by the hand and say, "Soul, as I died willingly for thee on the cross so I welcome thee with all my heart into my home." With him. Yes, with him, *to worship him for ever*, for ever to sing his praises, or sink adoring at his feet. One long Sabbath, without the shadow of a Monday morning; all Lord's-day; all worship; all blessedness; all song. And then as the joy increases to be able to say. "For ever! for ever! no nearer the end; no approaching termination." And when ten millions of years have rolled their course, still only in the dew of our youth. For ever, and ever, and ever, singing and praising and worshipping—revelling in the great ocean of God's joy. This is what it is to be with Christ.

IV. And now to conclude. Let me, for a moment, if I can, speak to you on these words as THE DYING WORDS OF OUR OWN DEAR FATHER.

It was only on the first of last month, on the Monday, that he was in this Tabernacle. He came just before the prayer meeting, and saw me in the vestry. I never saw him in apparently better health or in a happier frame of mind; with a smile on his face he said, "I have been thinking, Archie, that I may as well pay you what I owe you towards your Tabernacle. You had better take the cheque whilst you can get it, for one can never tell what may happen." How little did I imagine that that was the last conversation I should ever hold with him on earth! On the following Thursday he left home for business seemingly in better health than usual and very cheerful. In fact many had noticed how much more cheerful he had been for some few previous weeks. As he left home he said "I shall not be back till late this evening, so none of you need stop in." Doubtless, however, feeling ill, he returned home earlier than he intended. When they came home from the service at about nine o'clock they were amazed to find my father speechless. He had been suddenly struck with paralysis, and was utterly powerless to hold any converse. For six weeks he so continued, and sometimes it was almost more than the heart could bear to witness the efforts he made to convey his thoughts. God only knows how many prayers ascended during those six weeks, the burden of them being "Lord, grant that before he dies he may recover speech!"

is true to-day, that the more you study it the more will you get for your study, and the more careful your examination the better will it repay you.

Perhaps, out of all the Jewish institutions, and all the types of the Old Testament, there are none more simple, more beautiful, or more easy to be understood than this one of the Jubilee, which we have selected for our text. In order, however, to explain it fully, we must mention that it was really the climax of two previous institutions, the first one being the Sabbath. Jehovah in his infinite wisdom had decreed that every seventh day was to be a day of rest. Once in the week there was to dawn a day on the which the ploughman should leave his plough, the artisan throw aside the tools of his employment, and the weary servant find rest. God who made man knows best what man needs, and what is due to himself. He, therefore, never gave man seven days for work, but only six, reserving the remaining one for himself, and thus blending human rest and divine worship in one.

It is well, especially at this time when efforts are being made to bring a continental Sunday into England, to remember that he who calls it a day of rest also adds that it is to be a day *holy unto the Lord*, not merely a day of cessation from work, or a day of recreation, but a day whose hours are consecrated and counted holiness unto the Lord.

But then we read that every seventh year was also to be a year of rest, the year taking the place of the day. Six years of work rolled on broken by the Sabbath rests, and then came a Sabbatical year; and right throughout these twelve months there was to be no work done. The land was to share in the rest. No plough was to be driven through it, no seed was to be scattered in its furrows. What grew of itself was not to be reaped. The vines were not to be pruned, nor were their bunches to be plucked. There was to be rest for man and beast, and rest for the earth too, during that Sabbatical year. But suppose that a sceptic said, "How are we to live? If on the seventh year we neither sow nor reap, we lose the eighth year as well." God, you will see, answers such a question as that in the twentieth and twenty-first verses of this chapter. "And if ye shall say, what shall we eat the seventh year? Behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase; then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years; and ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat *yet* of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in, ye shall eat *of* the old *store*." So that God gave them such an amazing blessing on the sixth year that there was sufficient to supply them during the seventh and the eighth and until the commencement of the ninth year. Israel had to learn that God's blessing is worth more than all man's ploughing and laboring,—that if God is so pleased he can give such a marvellous increase in one year, that it shall be sufficient for his people to live on for three. This is the second institution.

Now, the third is the jubilee, which seems to be the consummation of the other two. First of all we had six days and one day rest; then, secondly, we had six years and one year rest. Now every seven years takes the place of the year, for after seven times seven years have rolled by, or forty-nine, then the fiftieth year was to be a year of rest, a year of restoration too, a year in which the trumpet of the jubilee should proclaim liberty to the captive, and freedom from debt to every debtor.

We purpose this evening, by God's help, to invite your attention first to *the gospel age as the world's jubilee*; and then, secondly, to *the*

heart's reception of the gospel which ushers in the soul's jubilee. A double jubilee we shall ask you to look at to-night—the jubilee of the world which has come because we are living in the gospel age—the jubilee of the soul which we pray God may come to some of you this evening.

I. First, then, LET US LOOK AT THE GOSPEL AGE AS THE WORLD'S JUBILEE. And notice particularly that the jubilee year was ushered in on the day of atonement. We shall not have time to turn to all the references. It will do you no harm if, when you reach home this evening, you employ a leisure hour in just working the matter out in detail yourself. Suffice it to say that on the day of atonement, after the blood had been shed, the trumpet was sounded—not before. First of all there were two goats brought, and one chosen by lot was slain. The high priest, bearing the blood of this slain goat, enters into the holiest of all, and there, with head bowed, he sprinkles God's throne. It is necessary that Jehovah's throne in that holy place should have the blood-mark on it to show that all its claims are perfectly satisfied. Then the high priest goes out of the holy place, and sprinkles with blood the altar which stood in the court of the tabernacle. Then there is brought the scapegoat, and on the head of that goat the sins of the people are confessed. It is led by a fit man out into the wilderness bearing with it all Israel's iniquities; and then, the atonement having been made, all of a sudden there would be heard from every hill-top throughout the land, a trumpet blast awaking a thousand echoes on every side. One trumpeter after another, as he catches the sound, blows his blast, until right throughout the length and breadth of the land, all have heard the trump of jubilee. Jubilee stood immediately connected with atonement.

Now, how is it with our jubilee? Was it not also ushered in by atonement? The prophets foretold the coming of the acceptable year, but there was no jubilee until Christ came, and there was no true trump of jubilee until after Christ had died. It was after he had been led to Golgotha, it was when his blood had flowed from his pierced side, that the atonement was made. Three days he lay in the grave, and the third day he rose again, and then after forty days he ascended, the GREAT HIGH PRIEST, and entered into the holiest place, bearing there his own blood. Then, the atonement having been made, he sends down the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and his servants go forth everywhere preaching the jubilee that had come in—a jubilee based upon an infinite atonement. Not until Christ had died, not until his all-atoning blood had been shed, were the disciples commissioned to go and preach the gospel unto every creature.

Now, if it be true that the gospel age was ushered in by atonement, it is equally true that the atonement of Christ must usher in all gospel proclamations. There is no gospel *without* the atonement, any more than there was any trump of jubilee without first the atonement day. *A bloodless gospel is no gospel*, but hell's choicest weapon. A gospel that ignores the Lamb slain is worse than no gospel at all, for it not merely leaves men in their original ignorance, but stupefies and chloroforms them with a fresh lie. I know that we have in our minds to-night many who are one with us in the sweet work of preaching Christ. My brethren, permit me to say this word to you and to my own heart—let us see to it, that our trump of jubilee is ever ushered in with atonement, and that when we preach liberty to the captives,

and the binding up of broken-hearted ones, and when we proclaim salvation for the vilest, we base it all on the blood and atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. O sirs, you must be careful, lest you ever blow a jubilee trumpet, so called, that has not in it the grand truth that it is the blood which maketh an atonement for the soul; for bear in mind, that all the promises, and all invitations, and all the blessings of the gospel, are based on the blood.

Let us look for a moment at a few of the chief things included in gospel preaching, and see how they are all connected with the great day of Christ's atonement. Certainly, *peace* must be classed among the first and chiefest notes. The gospel, like an angel, flies through the world, crying, "Peace!—Peace!—Peace!" Methinks, this is one of the sweetest notes in the whole of gospel harmony. But what kind of peace is the gospel peace? It is peace that is based on blood! For if you will kindly turn to the first chapter of Colossians, and the twentieth verse, you will there read these words, "having made peace through the blood of his cross." Oh, proclaim peace if you will, with trumpet voice, and with jubilee note, but mind that it is a peace procured through the blood of Christ's cross. The dove of peace must come to us with her white wings all spotted with the red drops of a Saviour's blood. If peace be one of the chief notes in the gospel, surely we may place by its side *remission of sins*. Oh, let us tell it out that God can forgive all sin, though he cannot overlook one. By all means tell it out that God can remit all iniquity,—that there is no sinner so wicked that God cannot forgive him, no sin so heinous that it cannot be pardoned; but remember, remission of sins, like peace, is based on the blood, for in the ninth of Hebrews and the twenty-second verse, you read "Without shedding of blood is no remission," and in the twenty-second verse "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin." How? "By the sacrifice of himself." Oh, sound that trump of jubilee—"remission for all sin, pardon for all iniquity," but mind, that both be declared as inseparably linked with an atoning sacrifice. "Forgiven!!!" Yes, but the word written in the blood that flowed from a dying Saviour's side. *Cleansing* is also one of the most sounded notes of the gospel, and it is a blessed thing to be able to tell a sinner that however sin-stained he is he can yet be purified, and that the soul that is black as perdition can be made as white as wool, and that the soul that is crimson dyed with iniquity may yet be so cleansed that even the driven snow shall look black in comparison. But remember that it is the *blood* that cleanses. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin;" and the jubilee trump that says "Whiteness for black sinners—cleansing for scarlet sinners," also adds "in the blood of the Lamb." "Find us if you can any pardon, peace or mercy, that is not based upon an atonement made."

And now and would that we could speak even as we feel, I entreat you be very careful whom you hear preach. No matter how cleverly the trumpet may be blown, no matter how attractive its notes, listen to hear whether there is anything about the blood of the atonement, for if that be lacking all is wanting. If there is nothing about a sacrifice having been made, and if all invites to sinners are not based upon that sacrifice, then the invite is all a farce, and the so-called gospel, but a hideous sham. Beware of the specious lie that we are forgiven on the ground of Universal Fatherhood, and that we are brought nigh because

God has a so great heart of love yearning after everybody that he cannot condemn any. Thanks be unto God, we are brought nigh, but let us remember it is at the cost of his life. Blessed be his name, we are forgiven, but let us never forget that we are forgiven in the way of perfect justice, and that our reconciliation has been accomplished by the griefs and blood and death of an incarnate God.

So much, then, for this point, that the jubilee was ushered in with the day of atonement, and that no trumpet is a jubilee trumpet at all unless it tell the story of atonement.

Now, notice next, that *the jubilee was proclaimed with trumpet-note.* The atonement has been made, and from every hill-top the note is heard. And who blows the trumpet? Why, man. It must have been joyous work to him. I cannot imagine an angel feeling it any insult if the Lord had said, "Go to the hills of Palestine, one hundred of you bright shining ones, and blow a blast that shall tell the pining captive in the dungeon that he is free. Go, blow a note that shall tell the bankrupt that his debts are all forgiven. Go, blow a note whose melody shall tell the weeping exile that he may return once more unto his home, fall into his father's arms, and have again a mother's kiss." No angel but would have coveted the honor, but it is man that receives the commission for the work, and surely, he will blow it best, for as he blows he says, "I am blowing good news unto myself." Perhaps the man on yonder hill-top owed a debt and knew not how to pay. Oh, with what right good will would that man blow the trumpet! Says he, "I am blowing my own debt away." Or perhaps that other man had a boy that was in prison. Says he "I will blow a blast that shall be heard far and wide for I am blowing a note that will open the prison doors to my own boy." He had got an exile, perhaps, afar off, and for family reasons that boy had been unable to return home. "The moment this note is heard," says the trumpeter, "the exiled one will be able to come back again." So the man blows, ay, as no angel or seraph could have blown. So no angel could preach the gospel like the man who is himself saved by the gospel. When we preach Christ we may well preach him with a holy ecstacy, for we preach that which saves us; and when we are telling the tale of atonement made we may tell it out with the whole soul, for

> "The blood that makes the foulest clean,
> That blood avails for me."

The trumpets were blown by *man*. And then observe, they were blown *everywhere*. It says, "all throughout the land." There was not to be a little nook in the land but what echoed with the note. The big city was not to be left in silence; and the scattered village hamlets were not to be neglected, whilst on the hill-side the shepherd in his little hut was also to hear the note. It was a great wave of music that broke over the land and eddied everywhere. Brethren, this is what you and I have to do. We have to help to sound the trumpet throughout all the land. Go, blow it amongst the great ones of the earth, and tell kings and potentates that they must be born again. Go and blow the note amongst the humblest and the poorest that fill our mission halls and theatres and tell how Christ can save the vilest. Go and be Christ-like, and proclaim to the perishing everywhere that the acceptable year of the Lord is come, and that he is willing to bind up broken-hearted ones, and to open the prison-doors unto all captives. Friend,

what art thou doing to make the jubilee trumpet heard? Art thou trying just to give a feeble blast? Perhaps some one will say, "Well, but I could not stand up and preach to a number of people. Perhaps not, but cannot you just blow the trumpet in the little back-room to those that are with you? If every one would fill his own house with music, there would not be a house in the land dwelling in silence. If every one determined that the little circle round about him heard the good news from his lips there would soon be none in Great Britain but what had heard the glad tidings of the gospel. O brother, put the trumpet to thy lips, and although it be a very quavering blast, and although thy nervousness is apparent from the very shaking notes that are blown, still blow for it was not he who blew the trumpet *well* that was the means of giving deliverance to the captive, but he who blew it at all. It was not the kind of note; but the note itself. May God give to us all a holy ambition to bring as many as possible beneath the sound of his glorious jubilee trumpet.

We notice further that the *notes of the jubilee trumpet and the notes of the gospel are identical.* What was it that that trumpet proclaimed? First and foremost it proclaimed a return to all exiles and to all who were banished from their homes. I think I see the father when that trumpet sounds; he pulls the bolt back and takes the chain down and says "my boy will be back soon. For years he has been shut out of the home. We did not care to have him in." That boy perhaps had offended in something, and did not care to show his face in the neighbourhood, so for many a long year the father had sighed to see his face again. But the moment he heard that note he says, "See that the door is not fastened till he comes back. My boy has heard the note as quickly as I have. Depend upon it that by this time his face is turned homeward." The trumpet sounded "home sweet home," to all banished ones.

There was a pale captive in a dungeon; but the trumpet note found its way between the iron bars, and I think I see him as he says, "Now jailor, off with these fetters! and off with them quickly! You have no power to keep me in durance vile a moment longer." See how he flings the shackles down on the floor and stretches his unfettered arms with ecstacy! That trump said to him the one glorious word "Liberty!"

Yonder is a poor debtor, and his debts have been hanging round his neck like a mill-stone for years, and he could not come into this neighbourhood for he had run so deep into debt; he knew he would be caught if he came, and if he went to another neighbourhood he was no better off. He owed money all round for miles. But I think I see him when that trumpet sounds. He just runs a line through all his debts. "Cancelled;" he cries; "no longer need I fear to show my face anywhere; I am a clear man once again."

Then there was the slave who had been toiling for a hard master, and had often heard the crack of a whip. Do you see the overseer standing over him with a whip, going to bring the lash down on his shoulders; but the trumpet note rings, and the slave turning round says "Thou canst not strike me, for I am a free man," and he goes leaping home from that plantation blessing God for jubilee.

And the bankrupt one who had sold his father's estate for a song, enters again into possession. There is no one now to keep it from him.

And I think I can see him with tears in his eyes walking along the old gravel paths he used to tread in boyhood, saying "Ah, many and many a long year has passed since I was here. Now I am back again, thank God, in the old inheritance."

These were some of the notes that the trumpet of jubilee sounded; but, oh, does not the gospel trumpet sound not merely the same notes, but the same notes pitched to a higher "Selah," still. It declares "return for the exile." The prodigal who is a long way off hears the note saying "Come home," and it is jubilee to him, and he says, "I will arise, and go to my father," and he finds the doors are all opened, and the father waiting to receive him. The gospel sings:—

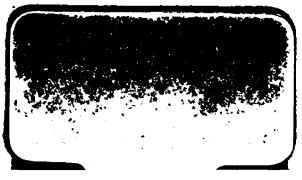
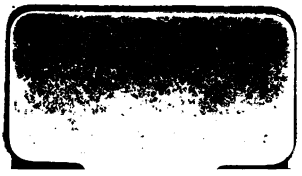
Return, O wanderer, to thy home,
Thy father calls for thee;
No longer now in exile roam,
In guilt and misery.
Return, Return.

Does not the gospel say to the captive "Liberty." O soul, thou that art fettered hand and foot with sin, it cries to thee, "be free." Rise and come—he calleth thee. And the note of the gospel to the bankrupt sinner is, "thy debts are all forgiven because they are paid by another. Thou needst not fear even to look God in the face, for justice hath naught against thee, as thy Saviour has paid every jot and and every tittle and every farthing for thee." Sweeter notes than ever jubilee trumpet sounded are these notes that come from the gospel. Behold, too, the man who is restored to his possession. I see him to-night as he says, "I have got an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled." "Oh! what a wonder that I should ever be able to say so—I who had forfeited my inheritance; I who went and mortgaged myself and sold myself outright for naught, to think that I should have given back to me such a bright possession!" And as by faith he walks its paths to-night, he says, "never, never, never did the jubilee trumpet sound such wondrous notes of bliss to beggared men as the gospel has sounded into my rejoicing soul."

II. NOW WHEN DOES THE SOUL RECEIVE ITS JUBILEE? I can imagine one saying, "well, my case is a very bad one indeed. It is all very well, Mr. Brown, to be talking about a jubilee age, a jubilee age and a jubilee heart are two different things." Friend, I know it, and I think I can understand you. Do I not express your feelings when I put the matter thus:—"I am everything that you have spoken about, I am an exile far from my Father's house, I am a captive, and the iron eats into my soul. I am a debtor, and I feel that I owe that which I can never pay. I am over head and ears; I am drowned in debt. I am a miserable bankrupt. I cannot pay a farthing in the pound. I am a lost man. How am I ever to have a jubilee?" Why, I tell thee friend, thou wilt have a jubilee the very moment thou believest the report of the jubilee trumpet. Thank God, the jubilee of the soul can come any day. It is not once in fifty years, or once in fifty days, or once in fifty hours, or once in fifty minutes. God is willing to give salvation any moment. The moment thou acceptest Christ, the moment thou believest the report of the gospel, that moment shall thy jubilee come. Remember, that it is not enough to have the gospel preached all round about you. It is not enough to live in a gospel age. There must be a *personal* reception of the truth. I see here to-night the very man who is an incarnation of the case I am

describing. I marked him as he came through the doors. Let me try and picture his case. Friend, thou hast sold up everything that is in the house. Thy wife to-night is broken-hearted and thy children are sobbing at home. What has brought thee here I cannot tell, but here thou art, and perhaps at this moment there is something saying in your heart, "I do not think such a wretch as I am can ever be saved. Can there ever be a moment when the jubilee note shall sound for me?" Poor sinner, let me tell thee the glad tidings. If as a sinner thou acceptest Christ, that very moment shall the jubilee in thy soul commence; and when thou comest to God, sinner though thou art, thou shalt find that he is waiting to embrace thee. The shackles shall fall off thy wrists unfiled by man, but snapt by the gentle touch of grace, and thou, the greatest reprobate in this place, shall have cause to say, "It is all true." The moment a sinner believes, and trusts in a crucified God, his pardon at once he receives. Redemption in full through his blood. Oh, that God would grant that some of you might find out, by joyful experience, how true this is.

And now for a moment or two let me try and blow the trumpet. It seems to me as I am standing here, as if I were on one of Judah's hill-tops, and God had put into my hand a trumpet, and said to me, "Now, blow that trumpet. Blow it as well as you can; blow it as clearly as you can; blow it as long as you can; and blow it for the benefit of every one." I pray you listen as I sound the note. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "*Thou* shalt be saved. What thou? Why *thou*, dear friend, thou—thou who art sitting there; thou who art come here direct from scenes of debauchery and sin; thou who hast broken many a heart; thou whose iniquity is so deeply dyed; thou about whom nobody entertains a hope; thou who art looked upon even as a disgrace to the neighbourhood; *thou* shalt be saved, let the iniquity of your past life be what it may. Shall I blow a second note? "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Does unbelief say, "What him?" I will give John Bunyan's answer, "Any him under the sun;" any him that breathes; any *him* that is found in this Tabernacle to-night. "Him that cometh." let him be bad as the devil; let him be black as hell; let him be such a foul sinner that an angel would not touch him. "Him that cometh," saith the trumpet, "I will in no wise cast out." And yet one more note; and oh, I would that its music might go in waves and wavelets right through every soul that is here; I entreat thee poor captive, bankrupt, exiled sinner listen to its notes: it is God that is speaking and not the preacher. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." I close by simply stating this grand fact. The atonement has been made; the blood has been shed; the blood is already sprinkled on the eternal throne; Christ, the great scapegoat, has borne the sinner's sins and the sinner's punishment; and now, based upon that atonement, I tell you that any sinner, every sinner in this place, can be saved the very moment he or she rests on that atoning sacrifice.

O God, we have tried to blow thy trumpet; let its notes ring in some heart to-night, for thy dear Name's sake! Amen.

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